

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University

John Hicks Interview

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BC: Today day is Wednesday July 23rd, it is ten a.m., and I am Brady Crytzer.

JH: And I'm John A. Hicks. I was born and raised in Renton in Plum Borough, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania. That's easternmost suburb of Pittsburgh, and using the term "suburb" might be a little misleading because it was an area [BC laughs] where there were three coal mining towns.

That's my background. On the way to Slippery Rock I attended Plum Borough High School, Brandeis University and then a United States Army Security Agency school. Been to Slippery Rock as an undergraduate, then to John Carroll [University] and then to Penn State. So that's how many different colleges and universities and schools I've attended.

BC: Okay. You said you've been . . . obviously in the Slippery Rock community for a while; can you kind of start from the beginning and tell us about your relationship with the campus?

JH: All the way back to the time when I was a student: Norman Weisenfluh was the president. I came here as a veteran and [pause] of course some of my comparisons were with the other school, Brandeis University, that I went to, which was a very well-endowed school. So this place was more blue collar, but in some way it was beautiful too because there were magnificent elm trees all over the place, [laughs] that the Chinese elm disease took care of. There are still a couple on front campus. But front campus was all that there was. And [pause] it was an interesting place because physical fitness was as important as academic prowess, and I like to think it still is that way.

So I was impressed enough with the way it looked to continue my education here. By the time I had gone through the service, I had decided I wanted to be a teacher and a coach, and that's what I did. And I did that in East Cleveland, Ohio. Then when I came back—I waited about ten years so they could forget about all the things I did while I was here—when I came back I actually was disappointed a little bit when I saw the buildings. The General State Authority buildings all looked the same no matter what campus you went to, and ours appeared to me as being like three story basements. It didn't matter what floor you were on it looked like you were in the cellar.

Having traveled to all the other state system schools at one time or another I noticed some of them looked a little better than ours. I think the closer to Harrisburg you were [laughs] the better you looked. But they had these facades to make these General State Authority buildings look better. Today, as I was on my way in, campus was a little bit torn up and [they] were taking

down some more of those buildings. Classrooms will be harder to get rid of because you do better asking to get one improved than you do building a new one. So that's difficult

BC: You said you've been here for a while. We had these transition periods from teacher's college to state college to university. Were you present for any of those transition periods, and what do you remember about that?

JH: I wasn't here for [the] normal school, though some of my friends like to accuse me of that. But it was Slippery Rock State Teacher's College when I entered as a student, and by the time I graduated it was [Slippery Rock] State College. So that would've been 'sixty-two. After I came back in [the] fall of 'seventy-three, it was still State College and I think we spent about ten more years before we became [Slippery Rock] University. So I've been here for state teachers, state college and then university.

BC: As a student during that transition period, what do you remember most about the change from one time to another?

JH: I think the change was more important to me after I came back as a professor than it was as a student. It looked like progress at the time. When I came back I was a teacher educator, and sometimes this change from being a state teachers college to a state college [pause] sometimes clouded our intentions around here. We were so bent on getting other programs going that sometimes teacher education suffered from that. Aside from that, becoming a university . . . I think I wasn't real excited about that. Although I, you know, went to all the events that surrounded it; that was a little bit of an excitement. But as far as what it was going to mean to us to have that different name, [that] wasn't all that important to me.

BC: Okay. We have a section about, kind of talking about the department you were in, in terms of how it changed, and some of the faces there. Can you talk a little bit about that?

JH: Every time we adjusted the teacher ed [education] program we moved different people around. And that caused us to change the name a little bit too, to correspond to who was teaching in that department. But my department initially was [the] Student Teaching Department and we had nineteen or twenty-three full time people doing just that. We had the largest teacher preparation program in the area and that included Penn State, where I had just come from. Also, we had an administration [program]. We called it Student Teaching Administration and Supervision, and a variety of those same terms in the name of the program. But we did pretty much the same thing no matter what the name of the department was.

BC: Looking at campus we have a new physical therapy building and things like that. And it's always felt like education has been the backbone of the university, but you know, all the departments stacked up on the hill in the same building. What was it like as a faculty member: did you notice any kind of feelings that you guys weren't as well taken care of as some of the other departments?

JH: You mean resentment [laughs]? Yea; I think at times. But when I see some of the new buildings . . . the McKay Education Building is a pretty solid fortress really, and it's going on its third renovation during the time I've been around town here. It's basically a good building but it sorely needed this new dressing because people get the impression of who's important and who isn't by what building they have. Just because a building's new doesn't make that program any better. We're still the backbone and sometimes we even have to remind the president and the provost that we're the backbone of the university and [its] most important part, because if we are not producing capable teachers the other programs wouldn't have anybody worth working with anyway.

BC: You mentioned McKay; was that the only building you worked in on campus?

JH: Basically McKay. During those remodeling periods sometimes they moved us to different places. I taught in the library for a while. I also had a couple different jobs. One of them was Director of Continuing Ed [Education], and I felt very important. I had an office in Old Main, and I shared that with Dr. Walwik, who was running another program for a while. Many of us who were professors did administrative kinds of jobs for a while.

BC: You mentioned your first impressions already: that you thought Slippery Rock was a little bit behind the curve, so to speak. Can you talk about—because you taught first then you came here, what was that transition like: college life teaching as opposed to before?

JH: As opposed to teaching in public schools?

BC: Mmm-hmmm.

JH: It seemed like a natural progression to me. It made sense to me and that's why I went in that direction. I felt like everyone who taught in teacher preparation should've had the same kind of experience that I had before they did that. But you take a big hit financially when you make that move. Your credibility is based on what you've done prior to getting here, and [in] some of the other areas of study, just being an expert is all the credential you need to get in. And sometimes those people learn how to be very good teachers and sometimes they're just purveyors of knowledge, and you have to turn on your own learning system in order to get something out of it. Most of the people who were here as teachers when I first got here had that kind of background.

BC: You mentioned Continuing Ed; were there any other committees or activities you were involved in?

JH: I think I was on every blessed committee college-wide [at] one time or another. One I remember in particular was the college calendar committee which is no longer in existence, but actually faculty planned the calendar. And I chaired that committee—very good and loyal group that had the best interests of everybody. And that might sound like an easy task, but you had coaches who wanted spring break to be in a certain place because they were making a southern trip or And those things didn't all work out together, but we came up with the starting date

and the final date and all that sort of thing. We also had eighteen weeks in a semester to begin [with], and that's down to about fifteen I think now. But that was an interesting thing to do and, you know, we got our share of criticism and praise depending on who liked it and who didn't, just like everything else. The administration has taken that process back.

BC: What would you say would be your biggest accomplishments at the university?

JH: I think I brought some fame to the university that a lot of people don't know about. I was very, very involved in teacher preparation national associations. I'm a distinguished member of the Association of Teacher Educators. I've served on its board; I served on a board in AACTE (American Colleges for Teacher Education). That was more of an administrative group. And I served on that board for even longer, and that kept Slippery Rock a peculiar name up front all the time, because they may not have remembered my name but they would say, "Hey, there's that guy from Slippery Rock." And I think that was important for the name recognition that we already had. A lot of people thought it was unusual and they remembered it, but I hope I added something to that memory that made them think that they had a pretty good program—[that] this guy was on the ball. I tried to be cutting edge as far as what was going on in education and then to influence it.

I also spent a lot of time in Harrisburg [pause] working with the Department of Education. They may argue that "with" is the improper term, but I was pretty well known down there for asking a lot of questions. And I was one of three people who started the Pennsylvania Association of Colleges and Teacher Educators, which is a well-known teacher education group today. I served in leadership capacities there as well. I think that might be my biggest accomplishment: being in those things and being visible and praising our school everywhere I went.

BC: You said you worked pretty closely [with] Harrisburg. A lot of the people we've talked to tried to explain that the politics of Harrisburg had so much more effect on campus way back when than it does now in terms of who was in charge and things like that. Do you think that it's gotten less political here than Harrisburg, or were things really much more politically-driven back then?

JH: I think it's more complicated now because we've now created a state system that also has a say. We used to report to the Department of Education, and they were so busy that they could not pay as much attention to us. So our efforts as individual colleges and universities weren't as dictated as they are now. We have to respond to at least two chiefs, and a couple that we do because we want to, like National Council for Accreditation of Teacher Ed (NCATE). Not everybody does that. There are only twelve or fourteen out of ninety-two institutions in Pennsylvania that seek that recognition. We've always been there; we just recently passed that test again.

BC: This is sort of a question we have fun with, but as a teacher what are your best and worst moments you can remember while you were here?

JH: My best moments were the most tiring too. I have a list here of names that I want to enter, and I couldn't trust my memory so I'm looking at my notes: Bonnie Barr, Garry Quast, Jack Burtch, Mack Porter, Dave Mohler. Way back when—I don't know how many years it is now—Bonnie was kind of in charge of this program, we called it STEPS: Students Taught in Educational Problem Solving. We hand-picked a group of about twenty young people to be in this experimental group. And we had an expert: our guru was from Bucknell University and his name was Dr. Bill Moore. He had a system based on four principles, and I'm not going to get into that except to say that this was a very heavy and sophisticated program, and all of these people have been very successful in their lives having gone through the program. We lacked a little luster with some of our colleagues, because these kids were hand-picked who went in the program: it was like a stacked deck. And I'll admit that that helped, but this was still a very intensive kind of program that not everyone could stand. But that program is still part of our program today. [It] trickled down (somebody famous used that expression who was president of the United States). That trickled down too and we added some other things.

And speaking of accomplishments, as assistant to two very good people who were deans, Catherine Morsink and Jay Hertzog, I was able to see this program through, and it was part of my job to direct everybody—make sure everybody got to do it. And I could use some persuasion that the deans couldn't because I was one of them. I worked very hard at doing that. But these folks all spent extra time. In fact we'd start worrying about our family responsibilities after a while because we were going to school ourselves while we were doing this. We were getting tutored by Dr. Moore who was an outstanding person in the educational psychology and teaching areas.

Downside? I can't think of anything too terrible except I think every teacher finds somewhere during every semester and every year there are a couple people in class who just don't perceive them as being helpful to them. And you can knock yourself out trying to accommodate them, and I think anybody worth their salt tries to do that. But, to just some people, you don't reach and it's always disappointing. You see potential there and yet you can't get it out of them. Of course that's, again: we try to control our teaching behavior, and whatever your situation we try to find ourselves, but some just aren't willing recipients and they can't hide it and we can't ignore it. And to me that's a little bit of a downer as far as my profession is concerned.

BC: Okay. Leaders on campus: in terms of presidents, do you have any recollections of the individuals? Because we see the names today, but do you remember anything about them you can share with us?

JH: Al Watrel was president when I first got here. I never called him that, or very many of the other presidents by their first names, by the way. It was "Dr. Watrel." Dr. Watrel was very good at getting some things going. There [was] a lot of movement on campus and things like that. We ran into a little problem—somebody else may have mentioned that—it sits up along the football field [Gail Rose Lodge]. And he [pause] had a hard time explaining his way out of how he built that place for nothing, and some other forces worked on him too. And finally he decided to move

on. He moved out to South Dakota I think, in another presidential position. But I liked him; he always inquired about how my department was doing when he saw me and things like that.

If I could jump back a notch to Norman Weisenfluh, for whom the cafeteria is named: [he] was president when I was a student here. Almost never saw him. The one time that I did wasn't pleasant: I got summoned to his office [laughs] one time for [a] disturbance in the cafeteria. I happened to be sitting at a table where some not so grown-up people were having a watermelon seed battle. And I was called down on the carpet too, because he said, "I see by your record, Mr. Hicks, that you were a sergeant in the army." I said, "Yes sir, I was." And he said, "Did you feel you could've done something to quell that uprising?" And I said, "I'm pretty sure I could've," I said, "but I didn't see it as my job." And [pause] I inquired as to whether he wanted to hire me to do things like that, and I would've liked to have taken that statement back because it didn't go over too well.

So that was my one visit with the president. He told me to choose my friends with a little more thought in the future. I didn't know any of those people [laughs]. It was summer school, I just, you know, I was brand new there. I was trying to make friends, not control them.

BC: Was that common: if there was some sort of disturbance, to be called to the president's office like that? It seems kind of

JH: There were only twelve hundred of us at that time, and everybody knew everybody. And they [pause] nipped things in the bud before they got started. I mean I've seen much worse things [laughs] since I've been back. I guess it worked: there was no more of that kind of foolishness, at least while I was here.

And I did get an opportunity—I don't know if I wanna slide into this . . . some of the jobs that I had as a student. I had just gotten out of the service and actually I was going to go to IUP [Indiana University of Pennsylvania]. Can't believe that now but They weren't able to enroll me until the next semester. And I had gotten out of the service in the fall, and Slippery Rock would take me winter term—or spring term I guess it would be. And so my mother assured me that it would be better for me to get up off the floor in front of the T.V. and go up to Slippery Rock [laughs] than to wait until the next September to get started. She couldn't stand to see me laying around: my transition period from the service into a normal everyday citizen life.

So I'm on campus. I have my bag, I'm moving into Patterson Hall, and the dean of men had an apartment in the corner, just as you'd come in. And as I'm walking past this door (and I didn't know the dean of men lived there) this voice comes out, "Hey you big so and so—expletive deleted." Gee, I thought I got out of the service. I said, "Are you addressing me, sir?" And he said, "I don't see anybody else out there. I don't know who you are, but you're gonna be on my side." He says, "Come in here." So I go through this door—and this was totally unexpected—and he said, "I have a job open; could you use a little money?" "Absolutely." So he signed me on as student assistant to the dean of men, and I served two deans of men before it was all over. Both him—that was Ray Evans—and Herb McGibbeny, he was the second one. And Ray Evans also

turned out to be one of my professors. I majored in biology; that was one of my majors. And I'll talk about teachers somewhere along the line here I guess, but that was an interesting thing and I really did use my sergeant experience in that job.

BC: You said you wanted to talk about teachers. We have a section for people that influenced you, would that be a perfect time to bring it up?

JH: Yeah, I think so. There were people like . . . you know, there's a little alley down on Main Street called Cornish Way. I know a lot of people go by there and wonder why, why there's a Cornish Way. Well there was a jolly little professor of mathematics named Edward Cornish. Everybody called him Pop, Pop Cornish. And I think if it weren't for him a lot of people would never have graduated, because we had to have math in our program, and he had a way of getting it into the most difficult minds where mathematics is involved. And he certainly helped me. He was all crippled up with arthritis and he came into old West Hall before they renovated. People might remember that we were using that, and I think it was condemned at that time as well. It's a very nice place now, but it had big creaky floors and plaster dropping down in places . . . and that's where he did his teaching. And he was quite the guy.

Robert Duncan in History; that was my other major. Social Studies comprehensive. [He] was an impressive guy. Charles Shaw was a great teacher. I think I modeled some of my own after him.

Walter Barber actually got me interested in birds, in biology. It's hard to feature yourself doing some of the things you do when you study biology. I mean I actually ran through these fields with a net chasing butterflies and found myself at [the] Pymatuning rookery looking for birds in the morning. And at six a.m.; we had to be up there by six a.m. before the birds woke up. And Walter Barber made that whole thing interesting. He was quite a guy as well.

As was Ray Evans. Our trips for field botany and . . . [I] had another course with him too, and he was just a great teacher. And he came out of Penn Hills. He was a high school teacher and he knew how to teach. I know he knew his stuff, but he loved every minute of it and that rubbed off on us. Carl and Norma Laughner are local people and are still here.

BC: Yep, we had them in last week.

JH: They were my speech teachers. They were born in western Pennsylvania and they could speak English. I had them back to back in Speech I and II, and they insisted that I also be bilingual. So I speak in the western Pennsylvanianese. I give them a lot of credit; they worked very hard on me. And I can almost speak English fluently now.

Another person I'd like to mention is Dwight Baker. He was the director of the band at the time, and used to chide the football players about who was most important and who the people really came to see, whether it was the band or the football team. And he would to say to me, "Well, I had a going rate today: it was three linemen [pause], trade for one bass player." Something like that. And in the process of joking he approached me one time and he said, "I would like to have a

men's glee club." He says "You can sing, can't you?" And I said, "Sure I can sing." So he challenged me to get enough people. And if you go back and look in the—I think it's the 1961 yearbook, you will see a rather large group of guys who, on a dare, became the Men's Glee Club. We performed in the auditorium in McKay when it was actually an auditorium and stage and everything. And we were good, I have to say. We were good. And we felt proud that he felt proud of us. So there was a special place in our hearts for him as well.

I currently serve on the Sports Hall of Fame selection committee. I also take credit for having started it. I don't know if everyone would agree with me I put one all together and the president at the time, his name was Herb Reinhard, completely ignored the fact that I had started it. And I had put some people on for selecting. [Pause] that was a little bit embarrassing because I had the sports editor for the *Butler Eagle*, so well known and came to all our things. And of course he never did become a part of this thing, and yet I had asked him. Well I [pause] I hadn't been given the authority to do that, so I got smacked down on that.

So the first year I wasn't on the selection committee, but Bill Lennox knew the whole story and he put me on it for the second year and I've been on it ever since. I'm one of the old timers in that list, and . . . I think it's good for the university to have done that, and it was worth the slap I took, I think, to get it going. So, another proud moment. I think that's it for that topic.

BC: Okay. Major events or activities, whether it be a national kind of thing that happened that was just focused on campus in terms of [the] 'sixties or 'seventies; things like that. Or any building projects, weather events, any cultural happenings in your time that you remember?

JH: Well while I was a student they began to build the Field House. But the only time I got in it: our football team happened to be pretty good that year [pause] and the weather was terrible. So getting ready to play West Chester for the state championship, we actually practiced on the dirt floor inside the shell of that building. By the way, they tore up three very nice ball fields to put that building there.

And it took us a while to get a decent baseball field. Of course we have one of the best now but, that waited a long while. And I guess Dr. Weisenfluh gets credit for that. And I don't know who got credit for all the buildings. I was disappointed that they didn't all look like North Hall. I thought sure when I heard all this building was going on during the ten years that I was away, ten or eleven years, I was going to come back and see this colonial-looking campus like North Hall and Maltby, which was the library when I was here. And I was disappointed to see that they had built all these terrible looking buildings, and the whole place was skinned. This place had trees down here; they took them all down before they built the campus. I think a young man by the name of Stewart who was on Parks and Rec [Recreation], took over the project of planting a lot of the trees that you see here. So campus is much more beautiful now due to his efforts and selections of the plantings that you see.

One event that I remember because I brought it here: we had a national, actually two national conferences. One was bigger than the other. One was a summer conference of the Association of

Teacher Educators right on this campus. And in order to get it done, I had lists and lists of a lot of my colleagues who I think became a little more interested in education as a result of helping us out. I had my church group come in and make meals for these people. They lived in the dorms; there weren't many motels very close by. A couple in Grove City; people who were [pause] used to a little more posh surroundings decided to go over there. But basically it was here, it was on this campus. The students helped with the kids. The summer workshop was a family kind of thing; you could bring your family. [We] found all kinds of things in the area to do with them. I think we paid this one band twenty-five dollars to play one night for a little dance we had: [a] reception.

We made some money for the association; we made some money for the university. And we got some fame for the university because people that had heard about Slippery Rock actually came here. And we had one other teacher education conference here later on, and we had some big names. We had a lady who now runs the testing service where we get all the SATs and everything. She actually was on this campus and was the main speaker. And a number of other people, who only people in education would recognize, but they were top drawer, came in for that.

BC: Do you have any other memorable events or memories that we haven't touched on yet that you would like to talk about?

JH: Meeting my wife was memorable; it's a story I like to tell. I was approaching Old Main where we actually had a lot of our classes in the upper floors, and I saw a damsel in distress at the main entrance. She was on crutches. She [was] trying to carry books under one arm and use crutches at the same time. She was an original Rocklette. Rocklettes were a big item on campus in those days: the marching Rocklettes. And we did have some doubt then whether people came to watch the band and the Rocklettes as opposed to the football team.

But I helped her get in the door and carried her books up to the third floor, and I found she was in that class too and I hadn't noticed before. Sometime within the next couple of days—this was Dr. Charles Shaw's class—we had just completed a test. And I turned mine in. He took a look at it and as soon as everyone else turned theirs in he said, "Mr. Hicks, I'm a little disappointed." He said, "You missed one" [laughs]. One out of a hundred wasn't bad. And my wife-to-be, Judy looked over and she said, "You missed ONE?" And so she decided she needed some tutoring which [pause], you know, worked out to . . . well, we had our forty-fifth anniversary here last June. So that was a memorable event.

The students did a lot of the work that we as professionals [are] doing now. All of the shows and things that came on campus, students decided what they were. I mean they might've had one faculty representative to sit in on their meetings and make sure it didn't get too crazy, but . . . they brought in some things. They brought in J. J. Johnson and Kai Winding, who were top notch jazz people. They both played trombones, and that was—I remember that to this day.

Eleanor Roosevelt: well known in history. I had actually served her at a luncheon at the university I went to previously, at a fundraiser up in Massachusetts. I didn't hear her talk here or I would have probably brazenly gone up and reminded her that I served her soup without spilling it on her. But I was student teaching at the time, so I missed it.

When you [were] student teaching you missed a semester. A lot of people I went to school with here said, "Don't you remember when they did the march on the president's house?" That was for Dr. Weisenfluh [laughs]. I said, "No, I was student teaching. I missed that." I don't know if anybody else that you've interviewed remembers the march on the president's house. It must've been interesting, but I wasn't here. I can't be blamed for that.

BC: What, if anything, do you miss about being here at SRU?

JH: I miss doing what I love to do, sometimes. But even when you do what you love to do its not all fun. So I stop and think: well at least I'm not talking to any mad parents today, or irate students because somebody did them wrong somewhere along the line. I enjoyed solving those problems, but, you know, when everything comes out . . . I was pretty much in charge of trouble and you know I met it head on, and was pretty successful at ironing things out for everybody's best interest, I think. And you miss that after a while, but there's a time when you need to move on and let somebody else do things.

I haven't been bored for a minute in my retirement. And the fact that I was appointed [a] trustee a year ago has taken some of that away, if there was anything that I was missing there. So I'm back paying attention to the university again, but in a different role this time as a trustee. In fact I was in Harrisburg Monday and Tuesday at a meeting, and sat next to the new chancellor and heard a couple of things he had to say. Got a few points in for our university I hope. It was interesting; it was a good meeting.

BC: Do you have any words of wisdom for current or future Rock community members?

JH: I think people would be surprised if my words of wisdom aren't things like, "Be professional, look professional, act professional [laughs]." Do a little more each time. Don't ever be pleased with how well you're doing, there's always room for improvement. If you don't like what you're doing, please get lost. I get disappointed when I look at some of my colleagues and I wonder, you know, where they're coming from the way they're dressed. I hear reports of the way they talk. Who needs to be schooled by a professional, educated person on how to use gutter language or that sort of thing?

Those would be my words of wisdom. So when you hang it up, you can feel pretty good about the ride you had here, like I do. I don't know what else I would've done now that I would've enjoyed more. It's been a good ride. I enjoyed it.

BC: And how would you like to be remembered?

JH: I think that's up to everybody. You know we just lost a terrific professor, Dave Dixon, and I was here from the time he was a student right up till when he came back, like I did. Much later. Tireless worker, loved what he was doing, that sort of thing. And I went to the funeral home and heard [pause] I wouldn't call it a sermon, what do we call it . . . ?

BC: Eulogy.

JH: Eulogy, right, thanks. The eulogy had to do with him writing his own eulogy. And in it, I think you do that. People look back and some people you nudge one way and some people you nudge another way and someone will think well, they might've made it without that nudge. So you don't know. Your legacy is who you were, and people are going to remember you depending on what the conditions were when they had to deal with you. And there are a couple things I would like to take back and a couple things I would have done differently, but I think I've been fairly consistent. And some of my former colleagues tell me they miss me when they see me, and I dwell on that.

BC: Is there anything else you'd like to bring up?

JH: Let me think. [Pause] I'll probably think of a lot of things later on. But I'm thankful for some people who are still around here who were teachers when I was a student here. Who, rather than treating me like a wet behind the ears pup when I came in, accepted me full time as their colleagues. We became friends and they insisted I call them by their first names and things like that. And I remember them fondly. Some of those were Dr. Meise, who was Dean of Phys Ed [Physical Education] at the time. We had five deans at one time. And I actually was acting dean twice and acting associate dean twice, and administrative assistant and all those kinds of jobs. And these people always showed me the kind of respect that I showed them. It was mutual, and I think that was important.

Asa Wiley was a great individual. He coached the wrestling team and did all kinds of other jobs around here. He has a brother Jack Wiley, who coached the line at the University of Pittsburgh at the same time, so they were well known people. I think Dr. Walwik did a lot of things around here that maybe he didn't get enough credit for. Very bright individual and tireless worker. They deserve some kind of recognition as well.

But all in all, Slippery Rock, like the president is apt to say (Bob Smith)—and I probably ought to mention the Smiths and Bob Aebersold who was a friend who . . . well I knew him before he was president. And G. Warren Smith: I don't know when we'll have another president who knew as many things as he did, who could do as many things as he did. Then there's the current Bob Smith who's a real people-person and he just can't wait to get out there every day. I guess he sleeps about five hours a night [laughs] so he doesn't miss anything.

And look at the movement on campus, that's exciting: all the buildings going up and the old ones going down. They're not taking Patterson Hall down. I thought maybe they should put out a brass plaque up there on the building for me since I lived in there once and helped run it. But

that's not the reason they're keeping it: they need some extra space and it'll probably go sooner or later too.

But the presidents: that's a tough job. And you can find all kinds of things you don't like about presidents, but basically most of 'em got that Slippery Rock spirit and wanted the best for the place. And you can't ask anything more than that. And finally, nobody in this whole country and maybe the world produces better teachers than Slippery Rock University. We are the best.