

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University
Garry Quast Interview
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JS: I'm really excited to be here today with W.G. Quast, Dr. Quast. This is part of the Rock Voices series. Dr. Quast, would you introduce yourself?

GQ: I go by the name of Garry, and a little bit of biographical information. I was born in Winnipeg, Canada in 1937. When I was about seven years old, my father was transferred down to Chicago, supposedly just for a year but they liked him so well that we stayed in the Chicago area and so most of my youth was spent in Chicago. Dad worked for Swift and Company, a meat packer and ended up being transferred quite a bit. As a result I went to three elementary schools and five high schools. So I never did really establish any roots, and to be honest with you I was somewhat of a wallflower.

JS: Understandably.

GQ: You know, I can't say I was adversely affected at all. I don't ever remember resenting having to move. I did a lot of reading. You know, I don't have any friends from high school. Well, I shouldn't say that, some of the friends from Chicago I still keep in contact with but they were more from elementary school, not from high school. At any rate, it was always assumed I would go to college and we were not a very wealthy family. In fact, we didn't have an automobile in the family until I was sixteen. Just as an indication, my parents always said, "Our car is riding around in your mouth," because I had very extensive orthodontia work when I was a kid. So I ended up going to Blackburn College which is a small church related liberal arts school in central Illinois where everybody works. Everybody works on campus. They build their own buildings – students build the buildings – they do the janitorial work, secretarial work, and as a result the fees were very minimal. It had a very good reputation in liberal arts. Not so much in education; they did have a very small education program but I always swore I'd never be a teacher. Don't ask me why, probably because I was a wallflower at that stage. But, turned out it was the right kind of institution for me because I blossomed. I was in the choir, I participated in intramural athletics, I ended up being on the yearbook committee and was the editor my final year.

And also the work program was administered by students. So I ended up being the men's work manager my senior year. In fact another fellow and I were the two top candidates for senior of the year and he won. He was a better athlete; good guy. He deserved it.

At any rate, I majored in math and economics. At Blackburn, if you got under the wing of *the* economics professor, who was a gentleman by the name of Morton Plotnik . . . and the ironic part about it is he ended up coming to Slippery Rock for a semester to replace a sabbatical leave as chairman of the Economics Department. He was a little Lithuanian Jew who was just a dynamo in terms of recruiting students. And he prepared his students for the Graduate Record Exam and as a result his students did very well on the exam. And once he “got you” you were his “kiddies,” and once you got under his wing, why you know, you just didn’t leave economics; very few did. And I continued in math because I liked it and I was good at it. Although what I later found out and discovered was that I was a good mechanical mathematician not a good theoretical mathematician, and I’ll talk a little bit more about that later.

At any rate, I did well enough on the Graduate Record Exam that I won a Sears Scholarship to Northwestern University, and they were interested in me because I had both a math and an economics background. They were fighting with the University of Chicago over economic theory and they were very into econometrics which was just a budding field in those days—this was 1958. So I went to Northwestern and I discovered that I, to be honest with you, absolutely abhorred economics once I got out from under the wing of Doc Plotnik, you know, I really didn’t like it. And I would sit there in class and they would say things like—they were all great for setting up mathematical models—and they would say things like, “Let’s assume . . . we’re gonna assume that consumers’ tastes don’t change in order to build this model.” And I’d sit there and say to myself, “But consumers’ tastes do change.”

JS: So you’re model’s not going to work.

GQ: And as a result I didn’t do very well that year and I didn’t get my scholarship renewed. So what do you do? I was married; I had married my college sweetheart. I had my scholarship provided—tuition and some monies—but she was basically supporting me. And this friend of mine said, “Well why don’t you teach math. There is a real shortage of math teachers.” Well for somebody who’d never considered going into teaching, I thought well, I gotta do something. So believe it or not I sent out five postcards to school districts saying, “Here I am: I can teach math.” And they were so hard up for math teachers that I got three interviews and one job offer.

So I became the “chairman” of the “General Math Department” at Waukegan High School in Waukegan, Illinois. And actually once I got in the classroom I loved it. I had a provisional certificate so I had to go to school to make up my education classes and education background, and I loved the education classes, being immersed in it—to take ed psych [educational psychology] and be able to apply it to the students that I had. But the only education class I ever took that I didn’t enjoy was education administration. But that’s another story.

Anyway, to be honest with you, much of my career could be summarized by saying, “You were in the right place at the right time.” I was lucky, you know? In 1957 or ‘eight, I forget which,

Sputnik went up, and it was the midst of the Cold War and the federal government decided to put a tremendous amounts of money into math and science education. So being ambitious I applied for a summer institute at Northwestern and [pause] despite my record in economics, they said okay. So I did a summer institute there. And then you had to have taught three years to get an academic year institute which allowed you to go to a school, and there must have been probably forty institutions of higher education across the United States that offered academic year institutes and you could go in the year, in the summer, and get a master's degree. So I applied to Rutgers and LSU [Louisiana State University], and I seem to have applied one other place and was accepted to both LSU and Rutgers and decided to go to Rutgers.

So I was one of forty students, and we had all our tuition paid plus I was given a stipend that was almost as much as I was making teaching, plus book allowance and my wife continued, she was versatile enough, she had a secretarial job at the university. In fact she was the secretary that got to tell the president of the university that President Kennedy had been shot. At any rate, I got my master's degree and that would have been 1962 [or] '63 and I went to the gentleman who was a math educator, the primary math educator and I said, "I think I would like to go on for my doctorate, where would you suggest?" And he said, "Why don't you stay here?" He had come just that year from New Zealand where he was a very prominent math educator. In fact he had written an elementary textbook series which was used all through New Zealand, and Rutgers considered it plum to get him. He really was the Math Ed [Education] Department—they really didn't have much of a Math Ed program at that time. So I said, "Well okay, I can do that." Well he got me a summer job and I started the doctoral program and I became a teaching assistant.

And this was very much in the beginnings of the modern, what was labeled the modern math movement, and my graduate work at Rutgers had convinced me that the way I had learned math was not the right way because I could do the mechanics, memorize it, but I didn't have the foggiest notion of what I was doing. So I very much latched on to the modern math movement which put a lot of emphasis on understanding.

JS: (I'm going to close that door). That's interesting: right place at the right time, yeah?

GQ: Well you know, I can remember we were good friends with my next door neighbor who was getting his doctorate in marine biology. He had to take a calculus course and he was dreading, I mean he was just absolutely afraid of it. And I said, "What are you taking a calculus course for?" And he said, "Well for example, if I'm doing research on the Raritan River and here's an outline of the cross section of the river, then I've got to know the area under that curve" Oh yeah, that's what calculus was. And you know it began to hit me that my whole philosophy of teaching math was gonna be different than the way I had learned.

Well, my mentor was very active in trying to become involved with a publishing company in this country and given his reputation he had doors opened that probably other people wouldn't have

had. And Houghton Mifflin Company happened to be looking for somebody to head it up—in fact they already had a program with authors on board, so there was a little bit of friction when he came on board, particularly as he became head author. Well in those days, the authors actually did the work—authors actually wrote the books for the elementary schools and wrote the teacher’s edition. They did everything and he needed help. So as a graduate assistant under him I became a hired hand to help with the manuscript, to help generate the manuscript. It started out just mainly writing exercises but then you begin to offer input and so forth. So I did that for probably a couple years and it’s a very time consuming process.

But you know there’s another example of being in the right place at the right time because they were not happy with one of the authors and they eased her out and they said we need another author and Ernie said, “Here he is.” So you know evidently my work was satisfactory enough that they agreed.

So when I was almost finished with my doctoral program in ’67, I began applying for jobs. I applied to a lot of different institutions, even the University of Georgia, and I went down there for an interview and I could have had a job down there but I had absolutely no interest in going to the south at that time. I did it for the experience. And not only that, they expected you to teach fifteen hours a quarter and publish and do research, and the gentleman who took me around the place had to drive one hundred fifty miles once a week to teach an adjunct course at one of their far away campuses and as part of his regular load. And I said, “Thanks but no thanks.”

But . . . two people from Slippery Rock came to Rutgers to interview not only me, but other people as well, and they were Gerry Chesin and Mark Selman. Now Gerry Chesin was at that time chairman of the education department—this would have been spring of ’67—as of the fall of ’67 they were splitting that department into Ed Psych, Student Teaching, Elementary and Secondary [Education]. And Mark Selman was assistant to the president, one of the assistants; Mark Shiring was the other one.

And needless to say this was at the time when SRU was beginning to think of expanding and growing. So they were on the lookout for young faculty. Well here’s a young math educator: we need a math educator. He’s an author: that brings prestige to the university. We’ll milk it for all its worth. So, you know, I was impressed.

Now I had visited Drake University in Iowa; I visited Georgia. I had had an interview at a conference with Colorado State and then I had the interview with Slippery Rock and they invited me to the campus. Well, I flew in, my wife was supposed to come with me, but I think it was just about, well anyway, our first child had been born and there was a problem with her so she, my wife, didn’t come. I landed in Pittsburgh and [pause] this old fellow met me at the gate, fellow by the name of Pete Hines, and he was the chauffeur, and we had to wait for the president of the university to come in from Harrisburg. So we sat in the airport and had a cup of coffee and then,

this was dinner time, and I was supposed to be at Gerry Chesin's house for dinner. And we come in—Bob Carter was the president—and so Bob Carter and I got to drive back to Slippery Rock from the Pittsburgh Airport together. And of course in conversation Pete Hines had told me that he was trying to decide which beltway to take. Well, of course, coming from New Jersey where they had all these beltways that are multi-lane expressways, you know, I figured this is kind of cool. Well the belt system around here is totally different, you know.

JS: Right, its back roads.

GQ: We wound around and twisted and Pete Hines must have been in his seventies I think there were times when I thought "Oh are we gonna make this?" At any rate, I got to visit with Bob Carter on the way. And not only that, we hit Slippery Rock and I called Gerry Chesin. I think I was staying in one of the dorms, and it was too late, he had given up on the meal you see but he said, "I can take you to the hotdog shop." I said, "Well that's fine." So I told him why we were late and he said, "Well let me call Bob and I'll see if he wants to join us at the hotdog shop." Well, lo and behold, he did. Now here I am a new graduate looking for a job and I am eating supper with the president of the university and the chairman of the department I'll be in and you know, this struck me as the kind of place I might want to be.

And not only that I had decided that I wanted to go to a smaller institution, and I'm sure, you know, psychologically when I look at my background [pause] having gone to so many high schools and blossoming in a small college to begin with, you know. Much to my wife's chagrin who had grown up in the Chicago area and was a city girl through and through. Now she says I told her we'd only stay a couple of years. I said, "I think I told you five years."

Well, you know, it probably was one of the best decisions I ever made. It was a great place to raise a family. You know we have three children; they all one way or another have done well. We made some very good friends. The university was very good to me because we ended up being very successful as an elementary textbook series and we went through several revisions and several, not only updates, but totally different approaches as the climate changed. So I needed time off to do writing and the university never turned me down.

JS: Sabbatical?

GQ: No, I, well actually, yes in part. They weren't sabbaticals, they were leaves. I would get a semester leave or a partial leave. I did several partial leaves – not several, but maybe two or three partial leaves. And I would get [an] advance on royalties which would allow me to do that financially. And, you know, it worked out well. The university was very cooperative in that regard, so . . . plus there was never any pressure for me to publish because I'd already published; not that this is a 'publish or perish' institution, anyway.

JS: No, but it helps.

GQ: It helps and in fact, just the other thing, you can't do this today: when I came I hadn't finished my dissertation, in the fall of '67. So Jerry said to me, you know, "Well we can't give you an associate professorship but we'll hire you as an assistant and as soon as you finish your degree we'll promote you to an associate." Well, they did. So I didn't start at the bottom of the rung. I did finish that December and actually graduated in '68; went through the ceremony. But, that again, is just a matter of being lucky.

JS: Well, it reflects well on you too I think.

GQ: Well, obviously, they not only wanted to get people here, they wanted to keep people here. So this was their way of keeping people here. I must say the publishing company was very—some of the people in the publishing company—they weren't too happy that I was at Slippery Rock instead of the University of Georgia. But, that's tough.

JS: Oh well. Well, shall we move on? You mentioned the year you were hired and the department. Your other positions on campus? Your changing capacity while you were here?

GQ: Well, the department I was hired in was the Elementary Ed [Education] Department. Then in the, I think, mid-70s roughly the decision was made to combine Elementary and Secondary [Education] and Library Science into one department. They effectively did away with the Library Science Department.

JS: Well, that was much later, though, wasn't it?

GQ: Well, it was later, but it was done away with through attrition. They really never—about the only person they ever replaced was the audio visual person. As people retired, the program just kind of died.

JS: And what years were those?

GQ: I would say by 19—I think, well, Fran Walsh stayed on longer than that because she taught children's literature, but by then . . . so it would have been the mid-'80s; the program was pretty well gone. Martin Thompson had retired, Andy Bach had retired before that, Ruth Wilhelm had retired before that. You know, Fran didn't retire until into the '90s but she taught mainly children's literature. And so we went through, and Gerry Chesin kind of left the institution about 1975, I think, and then I became chairman of the Curriculum Instruction Department and I was for, I think, six years. By that time of course we had a union contract, so it was an elected position and I think I was chair until I went on sabbatical in '82 to '83.

JS: So we weren't a union shop when you came in?

GQ: No, in fact that's kind of an interesting story. At the end of my first year, the faculty senate as it was called, called a meeting of all the faculty to give Bob Carter a vote of no confidence and

I can remember sitting there [pause] thinking to myself, “Now how am I gonna vote on this?” And I can remember Irv Kuhr in particular. Have you interviewed Irv?

JS: Yeah, we have.

GQ: That’s a definite because he would remember a lot.

JS: He’s got lots of good stories.

GQ: I can remember him in particular and I think Bob Duncan and Ray Biswanger were the primary movers of this movement to not support Bob Carter, and I can remember I abstained because I listened to the arguments and I could see merit to them.

JS: What was the beef with him?

GQ: He was very erratic in some of his decision making. His training, I think, was in psychology and like any psychologist he needed one. In those days this was still a very political institution. Emma Guffey Miller was still alive; she’d been democratic national chair holder. You know, I don’t know whether Bob Carter stepped on her toes or what the political background was.

JS: We’ve heard that as the governor changed the presidents would change.

GQ: That often happened, yeah. Of course that didn’t happen after unionization and actually enough had happened for me to feel very strongly towards the need for a union, and I became quite active in the union. I was a legislative delegate for years and in fact, I can remember I was on the first—I was chair of the first constitutional committee for the union. You know, we were to write the constitution. You probably have heard the name Marty Moran, who, he was hired as the executive director, and he was a brilliant, brilliant guy and a brilliant, thoroughly devoted union person. In fact he was eased out of the position by a certain faction of the union and he was hired by IUP [Indiana University of Pennsylvania] to set up their labor relations department.

JS: At this point, was it AAUP [American Association of University Professors]? We weren’t APSCUF [Association of Pennsylvania State College and University Faculties]?

GQ: It was loosely affiliated with AAUP—no it was APSCUF. But they wanted to affiliate with, they made various overtures over the beginning years to NEA [National Education Association], to AFT [American Federation of Teachers], and to AAUP, and there were times when there was cooperation but it never did kind of gel into a true affiliation. And as APSCUF gained in strength, which it did through expansion, it just became . . . as not only Slippery Rock was growing but so were the other state universities. In fact, going from state teacher’s college to a state college to a state university all is indicative of the growth that took place. But anyway, I was on the constitution committee and I happened to be in Boston on some business with the

textbooks and I got a call at 5:00 in the morning from Marty Moran reminding me to do this and this and this as far as the constitution was concerned. I look back at those days and say, “How the hell did you do all that?” But I really enjoyed that affiliation.

JS: It must have been exciting.

GQ: It was. To be honest with you the main reason I had union support was I had seen too many arbitrary decisions on the part of the administration that I didn’t agree with that were just, they didn’t like somebody—out the door.

JS: Under Carter or afterwards also?

GQ: A little bit under Carter but afterwards as well.

JS: I’m trying to remember who followed Carter.

GQ: If you remember this was the day of long hair, the pot smoking, and the anti-war [Vietnam War] and there was a certain faction that was very involved in that. Most of them were in the English department.

JS: Oh, so we’re talking faculty.

GQ: Oh yeah.

JS: Okay, interesting.

GQ: They didn’t last long.

JS: Carter had a crew cut; he was kind of the antithesis of that, wasn’t he [laughs]?

GQ: I did, too. The funny thing is I just have always liked a crew cut because it’s so easy to take care of and I have very oily skin and very oily hair so I’ve got to wash it a lot.

JS: So you couldn’t be a hippie?

GQ: I decided, “Well, I’ve got to give up this crew cut otherwise I’m gonna get stereotyped.” So I grew a beard [laughs]. I drove my wife crazy because I was always doing this. So finally I let my hair grow and gave up the beard. At any rate, I saw people, some very good teachers, that were caught up in this [who] were fired and shouldn’t have been fired, in my opinion. One guy in particular, he wasn’t a doctor and certainly he wasn’t a long hair and he was a terrific teacher and he got chopped. So when the union began to develop I was very supportive and you know, Al Watrel came next as president and Herb Reinhard and each of those guys had their problems.

JS: What about Roberts? Was he interim [president]? He was only here for a year.

GQ: He was interim.

JS: Okay.

GQ: I think Bob Lowry was interim at one point, also. They were just acting while searches were going on.

JS: And what about Park?

GQ: Oh, Larry Park, that's right I'd forgotten all about Larry Park. Larry Park came in between, I think, Watrel and Reinhard and that was a state story.

JS: State story?

GQ: The state, that was Harrisburg—

JS: Oh, they sent him?

GQ: Park had been president of . . . Lock Haven? One of the other state schools and had retired and then he came in and—I forgot all about Larry Park.

JS: I think maybe Irv maybe talked about him in his. I'll have to go back and listen to that.

GQ: Actually, he did a fairly good job of stabilizing the place, really. Watrel and Reinhard each had their strong points but they each had their weaknesses.

JS: Do you want to go ahead and talk about that? We'll skip ahead.

GQ: Well, Al brought in some, well he brought in Champ Storch and Don Thompson was his financial advisor, financial vice president. Al was a very affable guy but he made the mistake of building the lodge at the football stadium without permission and that was a no-no in those days, you couldn't do that and that's probably the main thing that got him fired.

JS: Whose permission should he have had?

GQ: Harrisburg's, he should have gone through the building process you're supposed to go through to get a building.

JS: So it wasn't a question of misuse of funds, it was just . . .

GQ: Well, there was always some question with Don Thompson as to whether he not so much misused as used for things other than what they might have been supposed to have been used for.

JS: Misallocation.

GQ: I guess misuse. I don't think he was stealing or anything. I think he was very good at moving money around to various accounts. In those days, you know, the Foundation was nothing. I mean the way the current presidents use Foundation money is probably a little bit like

what Don Thompson was doing in those days. But you know Al was a good guy, Herb he was a little bit too authoritarian for a lot of people.

You know, my, as I said earlier, the only education course I didn't like was education administration. And every time there was a change people would urge me to go into administration. I had no desire to become a dean or anything else. But my success as a department chair as far as I'm concerned was at least in part due to the fact that I had very good assistant chairpersons. I would turn over responsibilities to them. I did not micromanage. They would come to me when there was a particular issue or problem that they wanted to consult but they had free reign to run their particular areas. To me that is a common sense element of administration and I'm not sure our administrators through the years have had that quality.

By far the best president was Bob Aebersold, in my opinion, by far. And that's not just because I was on the search committee that helped pick him [laughs]. He had that personal quality that related to students as well as faculty, he did not micromanage.

The fact that Charles Curry is still here, Charles, if anything dots every "i" and crosses every "t" but he's been the kind of financial administrator that has kept Slippery Rock way ahead of our sister institutions in terms of surviving the ups and downs, I mean that's my perception, anyway. I think he may have come with Herb Reinhard originally, I mean he's been here a long time. But I'm not positive about that. At any rate, he's been a real asset and the fact that he has continued in that position is, I think, indicative of the respect he deserves.

Bob had—he was just, a people person and that dominated a lot of his thinking and he was able to patch up a lot of the wounds that had been developed over the years. Not everybody liked him but by far the majority did.

JS: He's coming in, too, next month.

GQ: That'll be a treat. I'm sure he has story after story. I think indicative of how successful he was is the fact that he got hired by the Connecticut system and not only that, repeatedly hired by the Connecticut system to train their presidents, administer to the presidents. He was very well respected as a college president, not only in Pennsylvania.

JS: And he came up through the ranks, didn't he; didn't he teach here?

GQ: He came up through the ranks; he was chairman of the Phys. Ed. Department and then became the dean of the school, then vice president and then president. He was also very good to me personally. Because I had some health issues in the '80s and he and Dr. Griffiths were very supportive of my problem.

JS: As president—was that when he was president?

GQ: As president—that was when he was president.

JS: We mentioned a little bit the transition how the university, well the college at that point was growing. When you came we were a state college and then we became a university in '83. What do you remember about that transition?

GQ: To be honest with you, it affected us less than it did other areas mainly because we had a history of being a teacher education institution. Now, you know, when I came the primary emphasis was on physical education but we developed a reputation in elementary education, more so than in secondary, of really attracting some very good faculty members and some very good people and as a result producing very good teachers. So the transition to a multipurpose institution began the growth of your other areas. I see the PT [Physical Therapy] program and the blossoming in that area as an outgrowth of the physical education emphasis and what's been there.

But I think the largest major still is elementary education and so the transition really, I would say had a very minimal affect on us, except it made competition for staffing a little bit harder. But I would have to say that for the most part we got to argue for staff and the university generally was pretty fair about fulfilling those needs. I mean they had to, even if it meant hiring part-time people. We had some very good part time people that came on board. In fact, Marilyn Yensick came on board as a part time person and now has evolved into a full time person and she's outstanding. She's great faculty. So we attracted some, you know, people who wanted to be part of this kind of institution and yet their primary interest was in the classroom, teaching and we were somewhat at the forefront in developing field experience programs which gave our undergraduate students get some of that experience while in the process of taking classes. Everybody's doing it now, but you know, we were somewhat at the forefront of doing that and in fact, I was thinking about it, a couple of faculty members in the early '70s initiated the program. I remember taking school buses to Catholic schools in Pittsburgh.

JS: Yeah, I saw that in *The Rocket*.

GQ: And that was really the forerunners of the beginning of field experience and I'm not sure they have gotten the appropriate recognition. George Newlin and Phil Wickersham were the instigators of that program. George was in Secondary Ed and Foundations [of Education] and Phil was in the Elementary Ed Department. But Phil was one of those ones who got stabbed in the back, in my opinion, because he had some problems and was associated with some quote "wrong people." But they still deserve the credit for at least planting the seed for doing the field experience. So [pause] the transitions, we [were] basically kind of unaffected, I would say.

JS: I'm getting the impression it wasn't such a huge deal as it seems like on paper for the people who were here.

GQ: And I don't think it was. I would say the only program that has evolved that developed any kind of resentment or, "Why or we doing this?" kind of question would be the PT program, but on the other hand it has proven to be very successful. And I think that was partially because it's an expensive program and took money from a lot of different areas, I don't think that is was necessarily resentment against the people that were doing it.

JS: So I'm guessing when you were here, were you in McKay?

GQ: All the time. When I came, four of us were in an office in McKay that one person occupies now.

JS: Oh gosh [laughs]. That's a great building anyway.

GQ: You know to be honest with you, every time they talk about building a new ed building, I used to cringe because it is, it's a great building. You know it's been upgraded and updated and I hope they never build another new ed building.

JS: You mentioned when you arrived for your interview when you came to campus . . . what were your first impressions of the campus?

GQ: I don't remember having any . . . I knew there was a lot of land. In fact, I think even in those days, land-wise, it was the largest of any of the fourteen and I think it still is although it's grown immensely in terms of the utilization of that, so it was very limited. But for the most part my world just revolved around McKay, and you'd have meetings and so forth at other places on campus. Again, the growth of the dorms and so forth is on and the two classroom buildings, the auditorium, they all just seemed to fit. The only thing, I'm one of those who regretted the tearing down of the Chapel, because it was a beautiful edifice. It should have been salvaged and [pause] you have to be practical; in those days it would have taken over a million dollars and I think they raised \$500,000 or something to try to save it. But it was a real shame because when I saw it, it was a junkyard. It was just used for old furniture.

JS: Yeah, I've seen [photos of] the interior just gutted and windows broken.

GQ: That was a real shame.

JS: And the library was up there in Maltby when you came.

GQ: Yeah. So the growth seemed to just be a natural result of the growth of the institution. You know, the library, it didn't affect us because we didn't have any classes. Well that's not true; when I taught Freshman Studies we had classes down there [lower campus] but by then it was well established.

JS: So when you said the two classroom buildings do you meant Eisenberg and Spotts?

GQ: Yeah, Eisenberg and Spotts. And, I mean, the art building was kind of a, it was a shed and it was kind of a student union when I first—

JS: The Hut.

GQ: Yeah that's right. And that became an art building when they built the student union. All of these were well received because they were needed.

JS: Did they play football up there on the old Thompson Field by the field house?

GQ: Yes.

JS: Did they have bleachers?

GQ: They had bleachers primarily on the road by [the] Keister Road side. I think there were maybe 2,500 to 3,000 students when I first came and that just has grown and grown and grown. The new football stadium was a big addition and of course the old football stadium was used for soccer and other sports. I think Coach Thompson lived right across the street on Keister Road. I think that's where he lived.

JS: I won't quote you on that. Oops, I think we might actually [laughs]. Do you want to talk a little bit about your campus activities?

GQ: Well, as I said, delegate to the Legislative Assembly; I think I was on the all College Curriculum Committee for several years. I was on the search committee for the [pause] next to the last . . . A.J., the basketball coach, and there was the Bob Aebersold search committee. I was involved with the Freshman Studies program which, you know we had a distinguished teachers' award for that. That was a very enriching experience. It actually was a great brainstorm probably more Bob Macoskey than anybody else, and Larry Cobb. Larry Cobb's another one of that you should have in.

And what was neat about [Freshman Studies] was it brought people from different disciplines together to teach, to try to teach freshman different modes of thinking. Bob Macoskey—it was a tragedy his early death because he was a very influential person on this whole campus. He was union president for many years. Just a brilliant guy; in many respects ahead of his time. But he was a joy, just a joy to work with. He had a tremendous sense of humor—a very wry sense of humor and a hearty laugh. I mean he could crack you up, you know, over the weirdest things.

But you know if you get to work with Brian Kearney and Larry Cobb and Joannie McKeag, Will Sayre helped us out there, and Ann Kemmerer. And it was a lot of work and it was just an exciting program to be involved in. I think it for a lot of the students it was a bore. It was probably a little too heavy for them at that stage of their development, but for those who got

latched onto it that probably influenced them as much as anything in getting them started in a college career. But it was fun to teach, it was a lot of work, but it was fun.

Really a lot of stuff was going on at that time. Larry Cobb and Tom Gaither and I'm not sure whether Brian Kearney . . . but we had also been made Danforth Associates. The Danforth Foundation at that time would select faculty members, I don't know whether we applied for it—I think we were nominated for it. Anyway, that was an intellectual endeavor that allowed us to make some contacts. They took us out to Estes Park [Colorado] for a week and brought in very prominent guest speakers and as an outgrowth of that . . . Larry Cobb probably was more influential in bringing to campus people like Paul Brandwein who had written a book called *The Permanent Agenda of Man*. Actually it's a monograph more than anything and he was a very well-known intellectual.

We also brought to campus Sam Proctor. Now Sam Proctor subsequently went to Rutgers—they created a Chair for him—but he was very active in the civil rights movement and he succeeded Adam Clayton Powell as the pastor of Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem. Just an absolute—he was an ordained minister of course but he had his doctorate and [was] just an absolutely marvelous guy—just a fantastic individual. And he was on campus.

There was kind of a meshing of the people who were influenced by what we did as Danforth fellows and the people who were in the support of Freshman Studies and they became involved in Freshman Studies. So it was an intellectual endeavor at times far beyond the scope of this particular individual [laughs]. But it just was great being a part of that and certainly one of the most influential aspects of my time.

The other, interestingly enough, when we first came we lived in a duplex on North Main Street and our next door neighbors were Anne Griffiths and Pat Zimmerman. We had a one year old daughter, almost one year old daughter, who became the apple of Anne Griffiths' and Pat Zimmerman's eye. Now, they were just . . . I mean not *just*, they were actual faculty members and at that time in the women's Phys Ed department so we had no trouble getting babysitters. And if you talk to my oldest daughter, the women in the women's Phys Ed Department are all known to her as Aunt Joanie, there's Aunt Anne, there's Aunt Pat, Martha Haverstick, who was chairman, was "Aunt Woofie" because she had a dog. There's Aunt Jean . . . all those women . . . and to be honest with you we became an adjunct faculty to the women's Phys Ed Department. I had the honor of being the only male at Martha's Christmas party one year. I take that back, her dog was male [laughs].

You know, the women faculty in the women's Phys Ed Department were a very close-knit, very dedicated bunch of educators as indicated by the fact that so many of them stayed here for so long. The men's Phys Ed Department in those days was not so unified, was not so dedicated; and when they joined as one there was a good deal of friction and it took many years for a lot of that

to clean up. Martha Haverstick was a marvelous chair and a marvelous person: very high standards, very proper in all of her efforts and a lot of them got stabbed in the back in those days. There was a real sexist feeling. There was an undercurrent of innuendo because a lot of the women lived together. I'd have to say that with maybe one or two exceptions for as close as I've been to those women I would be hard pressed to put a label on very many of them. It's too bad because you'll even get it from some of the old timers today.

JS: It's an assumption people make.

GQ: Yeah, stigma. At any rate, Martha—this just really occurred to me—probably influenced my behavior as a chair more than I thought. I would have to give her credit for setting a pretty good tone. We always, I always felt that we had a very harmonious department and we had very little friction. Oh sure, we'd have our disagreements and we'd have our problems but as a whole there was a unity of spirit there that made a lot of us as successful as we were.

JS: That's an accomplishment.

GQ: Well, I don't take credit for that so much as it probably helped, but it's nice when—I try to pop in every week or so to the department—it's nice to be told “Wish you were still here.”

JS: What year did you retire?

GQ: '99. Ten years, I can't believe it.

JS: What about some other accomplishments? The Danforth Associates, department chair . . .

GQ: I have been recognized by the professional organizations: Pennsylvania Council of Teachers of Mathematics, the Math Council of Western Pennsylvania. [Addendum: Also I was an assistant to the vice president for Academic Affairs, or president, I can't remember which, for a year or so in the '80s, part time.]

Upon my retirement I got this big thing in the mail one day and it was a certificate of commendation from the state legislature, which was initiated by Frank LaGrotta who was a local representative at the time. And the fact that we helped his sister get through school probably had something to do with it. Actually Frank . . . it's too bad he got in the hot water that he did, I thought he was a very dynamic state legislator. It was his sister that helped him get into trouble.

JS: The very same? The same sister?

GQ: Yeah.

JS: Oops! What about best and worst teaching moments?

GQ: I'd be hard pressed to really name . . . probably my biggest regret would have been the graduate class I had in the spring of 1990, either the spring of 1990 or the spring of 1989. It was a nighttime graduate class in Cranberry, and I was at the peak of my health problem and I had trouble teaching three hours straight. That's the one that haunts me the most.

The best one that I can remember was my last class. It was the last day of the last class and we were supposed to have some sort of test and they came in ready to party and celebrate and present me with a little statue/trophy of commendation so it ended up being . . . and there were some really good students.

One of the things that I have said in the whole thirty-two years that I was here was that the consistency of the student body—admittedly I wouldn't see the students until they were juniors and seniors, except for Freshman Studies, so a lot of weeding out had been done—but the quality and caliber of the students we had and most of them were first generation college kids. Their willingness to work and their willingness to take risks: when you think about going to student teach in Ireland or in Mexico City or in Las Vegas, and we had no trouble filling those, in fact, there was always competition.

JS: Talk about . . . where would they live when they were there?

GQ: When we first started they lived in the UNLV [University of Nevada, Las Vegas] dorms and now they're back living in the UNLV dorms. But Frank Lamping had a friend who owned an apartment complex it was one of these—it was built like a motel—but it was a one bedroom/living room/efficiency units and there were people that lived there for years and the summer would be an off time for that kind of unit because it's too hot so he would open up. The majority of the students lived there and we lived there.

JS: You mentioned him before we started the interview but do you want to talk a little bit about his association with SRU and that program?

GQ: Yeah, Frank had graduated, oh I don't know, back in the '40s I think or '50s and he went out to Las Vegas and taught and became one of their top administrators. He was invited back to campus to speak at one of the year end . . .

JS: Convocation, maybe?

GQ: No, I think it was primarily a school event or function of some kind. He was having dinner with Catherine Morsink who happened to be dean at the time, and Frank got to talking about how much they needed teachers out there and Catherine, being creative—great lady—started thinking about the possibility of sending student teachers out there in the summer. One thing led to another: they were able to talk with the Clark County School District personnel about that possibility.

When we first started, the majority of the students were in an elementary school that had the best principal I have ever experienced. She was just marvelous and she took our students under her wing, and I am fully convinced that a lot of them stayed because of her and because she hired a lot of them. There were probably six to eight teachers that were Slippery Rock graduates at any given time. She was just terrific. Unfortunately, she retired and went to work setting up an education program for a local college and the subsequent principals were not so hot. One of our first students out there became an assistant to the person who basically runs these programs and she has since moved back to Maryland because she's had children and wants to be closer to family. And a number of them—just as they needed teachers, they needed administrators—so a number of them are now principals or assistant principals. It kind of snowballed. I think the most we ever took out was about twenty and generally the number was around fifteen or sixteen and we still continue. That was in 1995.

JS: What about Mexico and Ireland?

GQ: They just kind of evolved. Ireland was really the first overseas program and to be honest with you I don't know how that started. It grew out of something with the student teaching department, and the student teaching department people basically had—Matilda Beatrice was basically the person who did most of the supervision over there. Then when they kind of did away with the student teaching department then those people were put into departments. We kind of inherited the responsibility.

I don't know what the initial seed for that or the Mexico program was. Now Tom Gordon, who is still on the faculty, Tom's the kind that will go anywhere [laughs]; he loves to travel. He's the one that's kept the Mexico program going. Part of it too may have come out of the International Office because I think there were exchange students that came out of Mexico City. It may have grown out of Pam Geibel, and the International Office. She was the assistant to Stan Kendzioriski and there was a real push for international programs back in the early '90s I think. In fact I can remember reading *U.S. News & World Report* when they listed the universities across the country that had the most contact with foreign students and we were in the top twenty.

JS: Really?

GQ: Yeah. With exchange programs, and not only bringing students here . . . we used to bring hundreds of students here from all over. It may well have grown out of that initiative. Actually, administration has always been very supportive of that kind of endeavor, to their credit really. I had a chance to supervise in Ireland. They accused me of not letting anybody else do Las Vegas but in reality [laughs] when we'd ask for volunteers, nobody wanted to do it. We liked it. Ireland was a different story. There was a lot of competition for that. I got to go over twice and that was a good experience, too.

JS: Can we touch back to leaders? We talked about a couple of the presidents. Maybe any deans or other union leaders besides Bob Macoskey. . . . Who—when you first came to campus and over the years—who were the old timers or movers and shakers?

GQ: I'd have to say Wilma Cavill, particularly with regard to the union. In the old days Ted Walwik and Barry Hammond were very active in the union. I think Lou Razzano was very active in the union. Have you talked with Lou?

JS: We haven't interviewed him but he's on the list.

GQ: It behooves me to say that I would not have had the success I had in the department without Kay Wolford, and I'm not the only one that will tell you that. I suspect she is the only secretary on campus that has a scholarship fund in the foundation. She is just a genius and she makes that department run. If you ever walk in the Elementary Ed. office and look at her desk there's piles all over the place but she knows where everything is. Any of the people who have been chair and any other faculty member will tell you that she is just marvelous. Just marvelous. She's one of those people who took the job right out of high school and she could be a corporate CEO. She was that bright. Kay Carter and Dixie Hogue also provided valuable assistance.

Anne Griffiths would be another one—she's another one that came up through the ranks and was dean. Very supportive. I was blessed as I said earlier with very good assistant chairs: Kathleen Strickland being one, Jack Burch, Chuck Rice, I think Dick Huckler was back in the old days before he went over to Computer Science to start that department. I think I probably got everybody, everybody I can think of.

JS: And then you'll go home and probably think of ten more.

GQ: I'm sure I'm slighting somebody. There's so many I remembered this morning that I've since forgotten. I was going to write down on a piece of paper and didn't.

JS: Well let's see here, major events or activities while you were here for example, academic, cultural, building projects, or even national events.

GQ: Nothing really sticks in my mind in terms of . . . there have been some real good endeavors that you kind of wish had kept up, like bringing the Pittsburgh Symphony in here. The cultural programs and the theater all have been well worth attending for a small institution. They, through the years have done a good job of that, I think. You get kind of lazy, I must say, in retirement.

JS: To go to things?

GQ: Yeah, to go to things. I do like to go to the football games and the basketball games, when they have a good team.

JS: Well speaking of football, do you remember the year the Steelers were here?

GQ: To be honest with you, that was before my time. That was '66. In fact, the only reason I know that is somebody was talking about it not too long ago, so no, I don't remember that and if they were here when I was here chances are I wasn't *here* because we did a lot of writing of our textbooks—working on our textbooks in the summer and they would have been here in the summer.

JS: Other memorable events or memories besides the big things?

GQ: No, I think I mentioned them all. The anti-war demonstrations and the civil rights movement per se were so much subdued on this campus because the majority of the students were not—coming from the backgrounds that they did—politically savvy. We didn't have that many Blacks on campus, so civil rights was kind of an academic thing. I think a lot of the Blacks particularly had problems when they came to campus. I can remember sitting in Isaly's in those days and the gentleman who taught at the high school saying, "If I see another black male walking down the street with a white female I'm gonna shoot the SOB," and I can remember thinking to myself, "And you're a high school teacher." And there's still—when they say that there's Pittsburgh and Philadelphia and Alabama and in between . . . I love that saying [but] unfortunately it's too true. I used to say the one thing I can't stand is intolerance; I'm very intolerant of intolerance [laughs]. I think we've come a long way. There's a certain naiveté still in the majority of our students. I was just reading in *The Rocket*, they've signed up a thousand students for the voter registration drive. That's terrific, absolutely terrific. I think this election [the 2008 presidential election] has made them more aware. I know a lot of things have made them more aware.

JS: I'm surprised that in the late '60s that that awareness wasn't here.

GQ: It was here but it was more on the part of the faculty with a certain congregate of the students not spread out to the whole student body. And certainly I think the Kent State incident awakened a lot of students to, to what was going on, and I think that had an effect across the country. I can remember when we first came we got delayed in coming here and we had already made arrangements to rent this half a duplex and my parents decided to come and help us move in. Because we got delayed, I don't remember why, they were staying at the Evening Star Motel and they were there a couple of days and my mother happened to say to the proprietor of the motel, "You know I've noticed that you have two big Presbyterian churches in town and this Presbyterian church just across the road. How come there are so many Presbyterian churches in this small area?" The woman's response was, "It keeps the communists from getting control." When my dad told me that story I said, "Where have I moved to?" [Laughs] I'll never forget that.

JS: What can you say about what you miss about being here?

GQ: I don't miss committees. I don't miss meetings. I miss the students. And I think if you talk to most faculty members that's what they'll say. We really have terrific caliber students on the

whole. They're good characters; they're good hard workers. They want to be here and want to succeed for the most part. What amazed me was how consistently that was true over the years. It wasn't as though we had—you have your problems with students every once in a while but on the whole . . . It's fun to keep in contact. Not many but a few, enough to be good for the ego.

JS: Well do you have any words of wisdom or other things that you would like to pass onto future Rock community members?

GQ: I think there's a whole new generation of people here. A lot of the people who came during that growth period stayed, probably a disproportionate number for whatever reason.

JS: You clicked didn't you?

GQ: That's a positive sense of accomplishment that people felt here. I think the majority of people that came here and wanted—teaching was their primary interest, research and publishing came secondary. If that came, fine. It's become more of a necessity now given the climate and so forth, and the competition. A lot of the people that started when I started or shortly afterwards, are still here. They still live here. A lot have taken off. They not only liked the institution, they liked the community and the environment. I can think of a lot of worse places—every time we kind of sit down and say, “If we were going to retire somewhere, where would it be?” We haven't come up with any magic—we always find something the matter with wherever we consider. So we're still here.

JS: How would you like to be remembered?

GQ: I would like to be remembered as a nice guy. How's that? I'd like to think that I made a positive contribution to the field of mathematics education, albeit a small one. I have to laugh, when you consider that I never thought I'd teach. When I came here Gerry Chesin assured me I'd be able to teach a secondary math class. Well I never did teach a secondary math class but because my mentor was so involved in elementary math—I became involved in elementary math and I loved it. I just loved it. It was an exciting time to be in math education and the need . . . math is suffering today because of people that, like myself, came through that kind of history that I came through and there were thousands of us that are now retired, dead, moved on and there's nobody stepping in to replace them. It's hard to get math people to begin with and it's hard to get them involved professionally.

JS: Interesting how you talked about the politics of the day. What was going on with Sputnik and everything and how that inspired the generation and there's nothing like that going on now.

GQ: The number of people who came through the academic year institute and became leaders in math education is just phenomenal. For the next thirty years the math ed. community has been influenced by those people and there's really nothing that takes its place now. There are bits and pieces of federal programs that make an effort. In many cases that I know of there was a joint

program between Penn State, Maryland, and Ohio State, I think, and they had trouble getting students to fill the program.

JS: It's not considered the cool major now, is that it?

GQ: No, and it's a real shame. I'm sure it's frustrating to a lot of people.

JS: Well, I thank you for your time and thank you for sharing your stories.