

Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University  
G. Warren Smith Interview  
July 30, 2008  
Bailey Library, Slippery Rock University, Slippery Rock, Pennsylvania  
Interviewed by Brady Crytzer  
Transcribed by Angela Rimmel  
Proofread and edited by Melba Tomeo and Judy Silva  
Reviewed and approved by G. Warren Smith

BC: Today is Wednesday July 30<sup>th</sup>, it is 10:50 a.m. and I am Brady Crytzer.

WS: And I'm Warren Smith. In terms of some biographical background, I am sixty-seven years old and retired from presidencies of both Southeastern Louisiana University and Slippery Rock University. I was president at Slippery Rock from 1997 until 2003. I did my education as a chemist, receiving a baccalaureate degree from Grinnell College in Iowa, and a doctoral degree in organic chemistry from Cornell University. My first teaching job was at Cornell University and I have spent time since Cornell at the University of Alaska in Fairbanks, the University of Houston, Clear Lake, Southeastern Louisiana University and Slippery Rock University.

BC: Okay. You mentioned a little bit about the position you held [here], could you talk about your affiliation with the university from the beginning?

WS: My affiliation with Slippery Rock University was coming here as president. Slippery Rock was a university that I was aware of. I grew up primarily in central Pennsylvania and State College, Pennsylvania, and so I was aware of the state college system at that time. I did not go to Penn State University, but having traveled around the continent at a number of universities and a number of different cultures, it was a real pleasure for me to return to western Pennsylvania—very much like coming back home.

BC: We have listed the different transition periods from teachers college to state college, and things like that. You were only here for university time, but were there any [pause] remnants from those other periods that you saw due to your position, as something that [you] could improve upon or otherwise?

WS: Well, the university went through the same kind of stages as almost every other teachers college in the country. From my perspective the university had transitioned in name from the college to the university, but still had some ground to make up in legitimizing its university status in terms of academic scholarship and the facilities and the offerings, particularly in the graduate area, to fully fulfill its responsibilities as a true university and a contributor to the state.

BC: Was that something that your focus was on, with making that change?

WS: Yes, my initial impression in visiting Slippery Rock before I took the job was that it was really a very good university. It had recruited over the years some outstanding faculty members.

There was a strong commitment to students which I was very much in favor of. It was dysfunctional in some ways because of the way it had grown. It had grown a bit like Topsy (idiom meaning to grow very fast, *Cambridge Idioms Dictionary, 2nd ed.*), in that you could trace the history as to why certain departments had been created and why certain colleges had been split up and why certain things had been placed in functional areas. But over the years there was an accumulation of groups that should've been together that were no longer together or [had] never been together. There were some real concerns on the administrative side of how things operated . . . things that had grown up without a thorough questioning time at the university as far as what kind of an institution do we want to be when we grow up. And that was, for me, one of the attractions of Slippery Rock. It had a good reputation, it had a good faculty, it had good students. It just needed to be put together a little bit better and understand what its position was in contributing to the future of the state of Pennsylvania.

If you come into a university that has already gone through that process and is functioning very well and is doing everything that it probably ought to be doing, it's not a whole lot of fun to come in as the chief executive officer because all you can do is to mess it up some way or at least just sit there like you're watching a clock operate. It's not a real challenge and it's not very exciting and you can say that you didn't impact it very much. Sometimes the best you can say is you didn't damage it too much while you were there. But Slippery Rock was an institution that I felt had the pieces in place to become a truly outstanding university and one that would be the first choice of good students, not only of western Pennsylvania but throughout the country, for a number of its programs which were unique and of very high quality at the university and not very well known. That's the fun of coming to a university that has many of the things that are important in place and really needs to just organize them in a way and market them and let the world know that this is a truly serious option that people should consider if they are interested in a number of career areas.

BC: Okay. You mentioned when you came in that before you was Dr. Aebersold. People seemed to like him very much and they were pleased (at least at the lower level, at the ground level) with how everything was running when you came in. Can you talk about some of the changes in terms of staff or otherwise that you felt were necessary?

WS: Well, it's true; Dr. Aebersold did a marvelous job of building the university from the college status. He was a great friend of the students and the faculty. He had come from the faculty. One of the things that I brought to the university was the viewpoint of someone who had been associated with running or participating in a number of different universities. And so I could look at things with a little bit [of a] different eye than people who had been here for a long time. And there were things that were very obvious to me right off the bat.

One of the ones that comes to mind, that in fact I continue to receive compliments about, was the old chain-link fence along the old football field. People had looked at that for years and never

thought anything about it, but to me having this nice grassy area with a chain-link fence around it and barbed wire around the top looked like a prison yard, particularly against the blank wall of the Morrow Field House on the other side. And when I asked about this, why the fence was there, because there didn't seem to be any obvious reason to keep people out, it turned out that [the grassy area] was the original football field and so you had the fence to control crowds coming to watch football games and it had never been taken down. It was a bit of a struggle to get it taken down. The first concern was that people are going to fall off the sidewalk down into the football field if you take the fence away. So for a year or so I compromised and we sawed off all of the fence posts to waist level and got rid of the chain-link fence. Finally I was able to convince people that we could eliminate the fence and plant flowering pear trees all along there, and [that] turned it from something that as I say, reminded me kind of a prison yard at Attica, to something that became one of the more attractive entrances to the campus.

Other kinds of things . . . some years before, a small traditional schoolhouse for the kinds of students that were originally trained at the normal school, the reason that Slippery Rock University was established, was sitting in a prime site which kind of closed one quadrangle of the campus. And as a result of that spot being occupied, [for] the alumni, who wanted their new Alumni House to be in the historic part of campus that they remembered from the time that they were in school, the only place left to put that was right in the middle of the grassy quadrangle in front of Old Main. It seemed to me a tragedy to dig up the last nice grassy historic area of the campus and plant a new Alumni House in the center of it which wouldn't be necessarily tied in with a lot of student activities and would take away one of the really attractive spots on campus. And I guess I was here about four of five months and the bulldozers were ready to start scraping off the historic quadrangle. I decided to stop that project and move the schoolhouse.

So that spring, we actually picked up the old schoolhouse and planted it on the corner of the [McKay] Education Building's grassy area, which I thought was symbolic for many reasons, to have a potential original classroom where our current education students could see what things were like fifty and a hundred years ago in the area. It really symbolized what our education program was all about. Also as a museum that would be open to schoolchildren and others that would like to see a restored schoolhouse. So that became, I think, a beautiful spot to display that house and it freed up a prime spot on the quadrangle without taking the grassy area away so that the Alumni House could close that in and make a very attractive compliment to the historic part of campus. So there were those kinds of things that when you look at it from a kind of a fresh perspective and not from the way things have evolved over the years, you can suggest some things that hopefully have turned out to be positive in the enhancement of the university.

BC: Okay. You know obviously that fence is, you know it's just a fence that you mentioned but in a lot of ways do you kind of see that as a resistance to change, not just a physical embodiment of that fence there? Because obviously there are no football games there anymore and it just remained, it never left. Is that kind of what you saw that as?

WS: Yes, it wasn't so much a resistance to change as that no one thought anything about it. People had seen that fence there for, I don't know, forty, fifty years and it was just part of a campus. It wasn't a question of do we want to get rid of the fence or do we want to keep it. It was just a matter of it was always there and nobody thought that anything could be different. The moment we suggested taking the fence down and putting a nice landscaping along there, there was really no resistance to doing that, no hesitation to change, but just nobody had thought about it.

We went through the campus and found a number of areas that were fairly barren and unattractive and unappealing . . . a little bit of renovation of some buildings that needed some façade work and cleaning up and so forth. But this was a campus that once was famous for its arboretum. In the area of Old Main, between Old Main and North Hall, were all kinds of plantings and exotic trees and bushes and flowers, which were famous in the area, and yet now it was sort of a bare landscaping. We ended up planting more than three hundred trees of various sorts around on the campus and started to restore some of the diversity of the flora on campus. And again, at times when things are flowering and coming out, it really makes an appealing campus.

People do make a decision about where they want to go to a university, in part, on how well-treated the campus facilities are and how attractive the campus is. Parents will look at that and really, I think, they make a connection between a campus that seems to care for its facilities, care for its landscaping, take care of the little details, is probably going to take care of their kids when they're there in school. It was an important part of turning around what had been about a ten year decline in enrollment at the university. That was another one of the problems that we had to address. You couldn't continue losing about a hundred students a year. It took us a little bit of time to spruce things up and market the institution. We now really [have not only] turned that around but started seeing a healthy growth in enrollment. The university started becoming the first choice university for a number of very talented students, whereas in the past it had often been kind of the second or third choice or even the fallback position if you didn't get into the first choice institution. This was one of the things that gave me some real satisfaction. People started telling me that Slippery Rock was the university they wanted to attend at the outset and other institutions became the fallback and second choices.

BC: Okay. What buildings did you work in when you were on campus?

WS: Pretty much entirely in Old Main in the historic—or not totally historic but relatively historic – president's office on the third floor. The president's office had originally been on the first floor and we looked at some design possibilities to move the president's office back to the first floor. At the time that I came, there was no elevator at Old Main and people were pretty well exhausted by the time they'd gotten up to the third floor. And I felt that it was important for the

president to be visible to the students and the faculty as well and moving to the first floor would have made that much more attractive.

BC: Okay. This is a question we haven't really had the chance to ask anyone else: the president's house . . . can you sort of give your thoughts on moving in, and what you thought of the house and what you think of the house still?

WS: It's a nice house. It's a very large house. As I recall it had six bedrooms, and the top floor of basically two bedrooms I suspect was made for a staff that lived in. There were still remnants of a bell that you could push a button in the master bedroom and it would ring an alarm bell on the third floor. It was built as most houses for presidents [were] in that era of the 1930s as a private residence. In many ways [it] was very much unsuitable for the kinds of entertaining and visitors that expect to be allowed into the president's house in a modern day university. There were some structural problems with it, some leaks in the roof that have never, even to this day I think, entirely been solved. There were concerns about egress in case of a fire from various parts of the house which were almost impossible to envision how you could escape from a fire in the house.

So one of things that we wanted to try to do, not necessarily for our own use, but at least in terms of a successor, was to enlarge the public area of the first floor of the house, make some of the house handicap-accessible, which was a difficulty because there were stairs to all of the doors entering the house. There was no way a wheelchair could easily get there. We had a ramp built at the time that you could, with some effort, [allow] people confined to a wheelchair to access the house. But we wanted to make sure that on the first floor, for example, there were handicap-accessible bathrooms. Even to the extent knowing some friends of ours who were university presidents and at various times had broken legs or other disabilities that they couldn't climb to upper levels for living, to make sure that handicap-accessible shower facilities and adequate kitchen and dining facilities were available on the first floor. So we spent a great deal of time thinking about how the house could be made more usable as a president's residence for not only the living of whoever was [the] current president but also for the various public functions that [are held] in the house. And many of those things that we designed in the house were finally incorporated into the reconstruction of the house. It's a much more functional house now than it was in the past.

BC: What were your first impressions when you came to the university? This is a question that depending on what era people came we get very different answers. Since you came later, what were your first impressions?

WS: Well, again my feeling is that it was a very good university that was not well enough known for the many positive programs and the people that were associated with it. Marketing the university became a high priority. One of the first things that we had to do though, as I said before, was to decide what kind of a university we wanted to be when we grew up. The

university had grown largely at the entrepreneurial behest of various people that were in charge of programs or didn't want to be in charge of programs, one thing or another. It was really a time that was fortuitous for the university, I thought, to sit down and spend a year or so thinking about what the important programs were, what we wanted to be recognized for, what [was] the mission of the university, what [did] we want the university to be looking like and recognized for in the next, say, ten years.

One of the very first things that I did was to establish a process that I called "Future Watch," that involved about fifty faculty and staff members of the university, about three hundred people from across the community and across the county to participate in a number of meetings talking about the mission of the university, the high-priority areas that were already outstanding but should have enough of a priority to be recognized and marketed. We set out about ten different goal areas that we've tried to say we could focus on to make improvements to the university. I thought that a number of programs were not well-placed in different colleges. For example, the environmental programs that the university has always been very well-known for, were split between two colleges and a number of departments. I asked our "Future Watch" group and others to imagine the university as if you took all the different programs that we had and tossed them out on a table as if they were pieces of a puzzle. Spend some time thinking about how you could rearrange the pieces so that they might talk to each other in ways that would benefit the students and the faculty and the quality of the programs that we offered. And basically that was a very successful program. We developed these goal areas, we did some reorganizations of academic departments and colleges, [we] did a number of administrative reorganizations that I thought were going to make operations of the university work more smoothly. A better understanding of the budgeting process, more input from faculty and staff members into budgeting, more understanding by the departments as to what budget they had to work with for the year and how they were going to spend their money.

Looking at rearranging some services so that they might be more helpful to students, for example . . . . The campus police had always reported to the financial vice president and the focus there was to enforce regulations and as a source of revenue for the university. I felt that the students sometimes didn't get the benefit of the doubt on decisions about parking violations and traffic violations and we moved it to Student Affairs where the focus was still on enforcing traffic regulations and making sure parking and traffic were moving smoothly on campus but it was within a group that was less interested in simply raising revenue, but was looking also at services to students and how the university could serve the needs of our students when they were here.

BC: Okay. I'm not sure how your position allowed for this, but were you involved in any committees or campus activities while you were here?

WS: I was involved in a lot of committees, both campus and statewide with the state system. The one area that I regularly participated in was playing in the university orchestra. And it was the

one way that every week I had a chance to be surrounded by sixty or eighty students and talk with them about some of the student concerns and what was going on at the student level on campus. That was a very valuable experience, much as I enjoyed playing with the Slippery Rock University Orchestra and still do, that was a very important part of having contact with students and very informal. They felt they could talk to me about things that were of concern without officially traipsing to the president's office and making complaints or protests and things. It was very helpful to me to have that kind of very casual, very informal opportunity.

BC: So the students were, you know, pretty open with you for the most part?

WS: I felt so, yes. They ranged from simple problems of, 'the heat was [off] in my classroom,' or 'there wasn't chalk in my classroom' or 'I got a parking ticket and I didn't think I deserved it.' Those were all areas we looked into: if chalk wasn't available in the classrooms we tried to see where there was a problem in the supply line and provide that; if there were heating and cooling problems we tried to look at the system and see if we needed to make changes in the heating and cooling system. We changed out the boiler system so that we could become environmentally more responsible in terms of using the soft coal that's available in western Pennsylvania with a series of really state-of-the-art experimental after-burners using natural gas in conjunction with coal. We replaced a lot of the steam lines to have better capacity for heating and cooling control on the campus.

Another major project was to completely fill the campus with fiber-optic lines so that residence hall rooms and all of the faculty-staff office buildings and such had access to the Internet which had not been done. And then we went through all the classrooms and made sure that they had video projectors and such that one could use the modern technology to enhance the classroom presentations.

BC: We have a question here we usually ask about presidents and what people remember about them, but I think more appropriately for you is: everyone talks about Rock community and community members and things like that. Was there anybody, faculty, staff or otherwise, that really kind of helped you acclimate to the whole system . . . because you were relatively unfamiliar with the campus?

WS: That's hard to say because there were so many people. A new person coming in is going to have lots of helpful suggestions. There were key faculty members that were very helpful to me . . . Bill Williams, for example, who was the faculty union president, was a very helpful person when talking about the faculty concerns. A number of people from the faculty and staff unions were important in understanding what the concerns and problems were that we needed to try to address.

When we put together the “Future Watch” study, I had the opportunity to appoint two faculty members to chair that committee. Normally those committees are run by an administrator, usually the provost or the academic vice president, and it was a little bit different. We had vice presidents and deans represented on the overall committee, but it was run by Sue Hannam and Jim Laux, two of our outstanding faculty members. Sue is now a dean. Jim is highly respected in his area of management and business. They did an outstanding job and I thought that having the faculty drive the question as to what kind of a university do we want to be when we grow up [laughs] was really one of the better ideas. It wasn’t something that evolved from the president’s office and was sent out as a mandate, but it involved as I say three or four hundred people to talk about what they saw for the university, what the needs of the region were, what the community could offer. It grew out of a much more grassroots effort than one dictated from a person that’s still trying to learn all about the institution.

BC: Okay. In terms of major events while you were here . . . It seems like if there is an event on campus that would require attention, you’re sort of “the buck stops with you.” Do you remember any events, whether it be national or very local, that you had to deal with while you were president?

WS: Well, a president’s on call twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week and so you always dread the phone call that comes after ten or eleven o’clock at night. Every time there’s a break-in or a student accident, or a student death, whether it’s on campus or not, the president is notified and usually becomes involved in those kinds of activities. Those are true really of all campuses and all campus presidents that I know of. I don’t recall any single major life-changing or campus-changing experience we had on campus.

There were exciting moments. I remember one time a squirrel apparently jumped into an electric transformer in Ohio and took out—the power in] all of western Pennsylvania and the campus was—this was in the evening [or] at night—totally without electricity for quite a number of hours. I spent the whole night wandering around in radio communication with security and healthcare people on campus, basically going from residence hall to residence hall talking to groups of students sitting outside on the steps trying to reassure that this was not a terroristic problem or a major breach of security anywhere, but that the situation was in hand and where the electricity was [being restored] . . . we were able to follow the development of electricity from Pittsburgh on north, county by county and city by city and we could tell people what the status of things were. A few of those kinds of events, but as I say, nothing really spectacular.

One of the more interesting ones actually revolved around our mascot. Rocky has gone through several iterations from “Rocket Man,” which was the original Rocky I guess, which was sort of a Flash Gordon character and had evolved into what many people talked about as an athletic sock with eyes; which the football program, the athletic department, thought didn’t adequately portrayed the fierce, competitive nature of our sports programs. Slippery Rock has always been

known for having, if not the most, at least very nearly the most, [number of] intercollegiate and intramural sports of the fourteen campuses in the state system. It just didn't seem to present the image that the new athletic program wanted to portray. And so, well I think the first year I was there, some members (I think they were from the athletic program—students) captured Rocky at the homecoming event or something and ran off with him and that was to be the end of that era. And we spent the next probably almost two years trying to decide on a new mascot for the campus. It's hard to portray a rock in a fierce and competitive way and so we went through a number of thoughts. We ran some contests and didn't have anything appear that looked especially intriguing and enticing. Finally we decided we really needed a mascot and put a committee together. I remember it was probably about this time of year [summer] that the committee came to me with a recommendation. They had come up with a mascot called "The Rock Hounds," and to me it kind of looked like a Rottweiler in a trench coat.

And I said, well if this is what you really want we can go with it but one of the alternatives that people had talked about and thought it was too late to do anything about . . . since in the spring of that year we had gone on a major campaign of *Lion Pride* or *Rock Pride*, [to] get people to feel good about the university and when they're out on vacation or at home or working in the summer, to talk about the things that are going on in Slippery Rock in a positive way and improve its image nationally. So Rock Pride was . . . you saw signs for it everywhere and people were talking about it and there were campaigns within Student Affairs. Several people had recommended or mentioned that a lion might reflect the pride idea of the campus and I told this committee (I think it was probably early August), if this is what you really want we'll go for it but it's still time to do something about this. I knew they were talking a bit about the lion pride aspect. I said go back for one last meeting and tell me this is for sure your final answer. And they went back. Comments I got back were, some of the committee members remarked, "I can't believe we're about to do this" [laughs]. And very shortly they came back and said if we can do it we'd like to switch it to a lion and build upon this idea of Rock Pride and lion pride. And fortunately that was one of the kinds of mascots that you can call up a costume company and they've got ten different lion costumes on the shelf. So we were able to call them up and I said do you want a nice, cuddly lion or do you want a mean, ferocious lion . . . define what lion you want and they've got the costume.

So we were able to introduce our new Rocky the lion in full regalia, right at the first football games of the season without any hitch. But that was kind of a, in some ways for the campus, a major event that people consolidated behind and had a chance to give input and come up with a new mascot that seemed to reflect the ferociousness of our competitive spirit. It didn't offend any native groups or whatever that many universities were struggling with at the time. And I think it's been a good mascot. I think it's done well in the competitive feature and it has done well in terms of the alumni and others accepting it as a representation of the university.

BC: One of the things we have listed under major events is weather events. About a year or two ago from the students' perspective, we had class cancelled for the first time they said in a decade or so. There have been times students complain walking through snow and rain, "why didn't they cancel class?" So from the president's perspective, what are the drawbacks of actually cancelling class for the day?

WS: I rarely would allow a campus to shut down for classes for several reasons. I guess in part having spent ten years in Fairbanks, Alaska, I wasn't really impressed [laughs] with the snow and falling temperatures in Slippery Rock. Our criteria in Fairbanks was three consecutive days of fifty below zero and we might consider closing the campus. But more importantly, when you close the campus and stop classes because of bad weather, most of the students, having cars on campus and a large commuting population, decide to take to the roads and go home or go to Pittsburgh or go somewhere else at exactly the worst time to do that. And my feeling was that it was far better to encourage people to stay on campus during bad weather, encourage faculty who could make it in to campus and students who could make it in to campus from the local community and the residence halls to have activities and classes going on, recognizing that there are going to be students, faculty and staff that are going to be simply snowed in or flooded roads or whatever it is, that they're not going to make it.

And we would always send out a memo to faculty reminding them that in bad weather where the campus was still open, that there should be some leeway in terms of quizzes and tests and attendance and things of this sort, as to who can't make it. But I always felt much more comfortable trying to keep as many people who were living in Slippery Rock, living on the campus, to stay on the campus in bad weather, than to say we're going to be closed for the next two or three days and on icy roads or flooded roads or deep snow they try to make it home to Pittsburgh or Youngstown or to the center of the state. It was partly trying to keep the campus operating in as normal a way as possible but a large part of it was the safety factor. I felt we were a much safer place for the students to be to offer things that were going on here, than to send them out into whatever was causing the cancellation in the first place.

BC: Okay. What do you miss about being at SRU?

WS: Oh, I miss the students. Students are full of ideas and creative things they want to see done for the betterment of the institution. I miss the opportunity to have a hand in making the changes at the university that continue to make it an improved and more highly respected institution. I don't miss the calls that came after about eleven o'clock at night [laughs]. There's a certain comfort level in not being responsible for ten thousand people at times that you probably are better off not knowing what they're doing.

On the other hand its been relatively easy, because I have a lot of different interests and a lot of different activities to transition from a very active life that was almost solely concentrated on the

well-being of the university, to one which gave me a chance to do projects that had been sitting around for twenty years or more and [I] hadn't been able to find the time to devote to them. We built a house on the edge of town. One of the first things I did was to take two cars that had been sitting in my driveway for a decade and make one out of them that ran, which seemed to be a great improvement for all concerned. Just a number of things that I was able to participate in that were difficult to schedule, either the block of time or just even the participation of timed events to be a part of.

BC: Okay. Do you have any words of wisdom for current or future Rock community members that you would like them to know?

WS: Well, I think that the fact that the university grew out of a community need. It's not an institution that somebody rode in here and said I'm going to found a university on this spot because I think it's good for you people. This was a university that grew up because citizens of the community of Slippery Rock got together and said we have a real need for teachers for our children. And the state was allowing a certain number of communities to establish a state normal school to train those teachers, and the community said we want to be one of those communities. And there was in fact a struggle with several communities in western Pennsylvania, I think. Harrisville was involved in wanting the university, the normal school. But this is an institution that grew out of the desires and needs of the people in this region and I think it's always been an institution that tried to be responsive to the needs of the people in this region. Many of the programs, not only the academic programs, but also service programs and activities the university participates in, arise from a feeling that we are a part of this community.

When it came to a time when again this was a major event for both the university and the community, that enough people said our downtown area is looking poorly, it's not something that attracts students or faculty or staff or anyone else to want to come and be a part of Slippery Rock for their living and their families. It was the university and the community that got together and formed a committee that's still active today that said, we can do better. We can make this a town that people want to come to and are proud to be from, rather than when we try to bring visitors in at night so that they can't see that the sidewalks are broken and the streets full of potholes. If you looked up Main Street from 1980, all you could see were a forest of telephone poles and power lines and telephone lines. It looked like pictures out of an urban area from the 1920s. It was a discouraging sight and the university and the community got together and said we can do something about this, and they did. They redid all the sidewalks, redid the streets, buried all the power lines, put up nice streetlights, did facade grants.

It's a partnership that I think continues today as a very positive aspect. They continue to look at other areas, particularly the entrances and focal points in town, to say we want to make this a town that we are all proud to say we're from. I think this is part of what we went through with the university with "Future Watch" and other planning efforts. We wanted this to be a university

that faculty and staff and students were proud to say, “I’m from Slippery Rock University.” It’s a great transition to watch, from people who are almost a little bit embarrassed to say, “I’m from Slippery Rock University” and they say it almost quietly as if they hope no one noticed, to people who want to stand up and say, “I’m from Slippery Rock University!” and they mean it and they’re proud of it and want to let people know what’s going on here.

BC: Okay. This is one of the questions we always close with: how would you like to be remembered?

WS: I guess I’d like to be remembered as one who brought some new ideas and creativity and helped to generate enthusiasm for the university both on campus and off-campus. We tried some new creative things. The Regional [Learning] Alliance in Cranberry was my idea, something that I wanted to do at my previous presidency in Louisiana and never had a chance to put together. I think that’s been a great success story for the university. As far as I know, it’s unique in the country.

We’ve created programs for retirees: our Institute for Learning in Retirement is a highly successful and nationally-known program, serving a real need to our retired faculty and many older and even younger members in this region.

So I would hope that the time I was here would be looked at as a time that we did some intensive looking at the university internally, as to just what we wanted to be and how could we put it together to most effectively do that and to develop more outreach programs that affected the well being of Slippery Rock community and Butler County and even regionally with some of our efforts.

BC: Okay, is there anything else you’d like to add before we close up?

WS: Just to say that I’m very proud of this institution and the things that it’s accomplished both before I came here and after. It’s a university that increases in its size, increases in improving its facilities, increases in its reputation nationally. It’s starting to be recognized by a number of national and international books and reviews, getting some of the attention that I felt at the beginning that it deserved to have. And I think the future’s very bright for Slippery Rock University. [It is] one of the reasons I decided to stay in town and continue to be active with organizations such as our Institute for Learning in Retirement, where I usually teach four or five courses and take a number [of courses], and to continue participating with the university symphony.

BC: Okay, well, Dr. Smith thank you very much for coming in today. This was wonderful and any time you’d like to come back, we’d be happy to have you.

WS: I appreciate the opportunity.