Rock Voices: The Oral History Project of Slippery Rock University
David Taylor Interview
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Interviewed by Amy Brunner
Transcribed by Amy Brunner and Andrew Hill
Proofread and edited by Judy Silva and Amy Brunner
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AB: Well, let me get my glasses on, because [pause] I can't read anything without them either, so . . . .

DT: [laughs]

AB: I do have the voice recorder going.

DT: I'll tell you if I have my glasses off, all I can do is smell things [laughter]; and it's a poor substitute for reading.

AB: Yes, yes. I can see far away with[out] them, but I got to that point, that late thirties point where . . . [laughs].

DT: Oh, gee. You know I hit the age of 44 in the summer of 1983, and I was teaching Organic Chemistry that summer. And I suddenly went from being able to read students' problem sets to, "Oh my God." I had to get a set of bifocals so quickly that summer, it was not funny.

AB: Oh, I can imagine.

DT: It was just startling [laughs].

AB: Well, I always had really good vision and then all of a sudden, I went to the eye doctor and they said, "Oh, you need readers now."

DT: Well, that's not a disqualifier of vision quality. That's age, and you can retain good visual acuity readily. I was really surprised. I started learning how to fly a plane when I was 47 years old.

AB: Really?

DT: And the optometrist that I was going to was also a pilot, which I did not know at the time. So he would really take his time ripping on me. My corrected vision at that time was 20/15, and that surprised me because I have been wearing glasses for 69 years now. But it turns out that it's not necessarily how good your visual acuity is but how you interpret the images that you see.

AB: Of course.

DT: I found that I could pick out an airport fifteen to twenty miles away just by a different textural pattern on the horizon. A friend of mine [laughs] he usually couldn't see them until we were setting up for our landing approach [laughs].

AB: [Laughs] Oh, man. Well, let's go ahead and circle back to the beginning. Okay?

DT: Okay.

AB: If I could just have your name, your . . . approximate date of birth, where you're from, and just some background.

DT: Okay. My name is David C. Taylor, and my expected birth date was July 29th 1939. I was an early arriver, and I haven't stopped since. And I was born, grew up, and graduated from Bowdoin College in Maine. I had to go out of state for further education, as . . . as an M.A. at Wesleyan University and a Ph.D. at the University of Connecticut. It's also known as UConn, and that creates confusion with people too. My specialty was analytical chemistry with a minor in organic chemistry.

AB: Okay.

DT: I arrived at Slippery Rock State College with a half complete dissertation, and in November 1970, slightly more than two years after arrival, I finished.

AB: Yay! [Laughter] And what exactly did you do for us here at Slippery Rock University? Well, I guess it was the State College back then.

DT: Yeah. I was hired in the fall as a temporary assistant professor in the Department of Chemistry. And along the way, I was the director of the Slippery Rock University Planetarium, The Rocket Room, from 1979 through 1987. I retired from the Department of Chemistry and Physics in 2004. The merger of Physics and Chemistry was only a . . . two year proposition, but it turns out that it's very appropriate because in order to teach chemistry, you have to teach physics.

AB: That is true. I mean, in my particular case, I've taken my chemistry classes.

DT: Good.

AB: I have, and at this point, all I remember is how to do the little dot diagrams [laughs].

DT: Good. Well, it took me until I was about 40 years old to discover that not everybody dug chemistry the same way that I did. And I think part of it was a consequence of the fact that practically every innate and learned capability or ability that people have has to be brought to bear when you do study chemistry. My experience studying chemistry has really made anything that I have done over the years extraordinarily easy.

AB: That's true. I mean because there is the math aspect, there's the spatial aspect.

DT: Yes, it's very much a head game. If you have a vivid imagination, that works very, very well in chemistry.

AB: Yes.

DT: I ascribe that to old radio programs . . . listening to *The Shadow*, the hairs on the back of your neck stood up . . . even if you didn't have any at that time.

AB: [Laughs] As I mentioned, you were here during the State College era, but when . . . do you remember or do you have any thoughts or any recollections about the transition from state college to university?

DT: No, because chemistry is hardly ever affected by name changes [laughs]. It's interesting that when I came here in 1968, many local people were still referring to Slippery Rock State College as Slippery Rock State *Teachers'* College. And I even hear today people referring to Slippery Rock University as Slippery Rock State College. It takes a long time to adjust to changes, and the irony is that in chemistry when changes in theories or changes, well . . . not many changes in laws however, but when changes in theory come along you have to respond, you know, quite promptly, quite quickly to make sure that your students are current with contemporary practice.

AB: [Clears throat] Excuse me. Did the department--you mentioned that the department was Chemistry, and then became Chemistry and Physics. How exactly did that change come about?

DT: I think that was a consequence of what was perceived to be a personnel type of challenge that was occurring at the time. I, at that time, did not really feel too strongly involved in that aspect because that was about three years before I retired or so. That was not really a big issue.

AB: I see here that you said that the leadership within the Chemistry Department did change fairly regularly.

DT: Yeah. According to the collective bargaining agreement, chairs are elected for a three-year period of time, and it is a challenging task. It takes a lot of time. It's . . . not the world's easiest task when you have a . . . group of people to represent, rather than govern. College professors are notoriously ungovernable [laughter].

AB: Which building did you work in?

DT: I spent my entire career in Vincent Science Hall, which I guess is now known as Vincent Science Center. I missed the move-in of 1968, although I did tour the building while it was under construction when I was here for an interview. And I missed the move-out to Advanced Technology and Science, which I was happy to do. I had two separate office locations in Vincent Science Hall in thirty-five years. After I had a chance to visit the renovated building, I could not find the doorway, which still existed, that actually went into my old office [laughs].

AB: It's a very nice building. I mean, this is my first semester here, but it is a very nice building.

DT: It is an incredible building with the exception of the lack of right angle corners in many parts of it. That was one of the few things they could not rectify.

AB: Well, it is difficult inside of a round building, not impossible.

DT: Yeah . . . it's not impossible, but it is a bit of a challenge. You have to be careful how you place file cabinets so that nothing can fall off the top and be lost forever.

AB: [Laughs] That is true. What was it like when you came here for your interview? What was your first impression of Slippery Rock College?

DT: Most of the university, at that time, was located on the top of the hill. I think only [Spotts] World Cultures Building was down significantly. We had Maltby Library, Old Main . . . the [Miller] Auditorium. The original lab school was basically abandoned at the time. We had Morrow Field House, the Special Education Building, the heating plant, and where the present art building's located, that was known as El Gato. That was the student union . . . and part time food service facility, and the bookstore was in the basement. Weisenfluh was the only eating facility on campus at the time. And the interesting thing is that, in one of my offices I could look over the entire eastern section of the campus, which didn't exist in 1968. And then, periodically I'd think, "How much is changing around here?" I'd go look out the window and enumerate the years which all of the succeeding buildings were built. And we were looking at a new building here about every two to three years.

AB: Wow.

DT: Either a new building or a major renovation going on somewhere.

AB: I know that my experience was, the first time I set foot on this campus was in '88 . . . there was nothing to the east. Basically the campus ended with what's the Old Union now.

DT: Yea, Bailey Library and the [Swope] Music Building did not exist. Eisenberg, the library and the student union building were *it*. Yeah, fortunately, we have a huge campus, and that has made a wonderful opportunity for new buildings to be designed. I like to see the variation in architecture that now exists on campus.

But when I first came here in March of 1968, a select group of faculty were organizing a vote of no confidence for the current president, at that time, Robert Carter. Very quickly, I still remember the names of many of the people who were involved in that because most of them at that time were in Strain Behavioral Science Building, which in 1968, was *the* science building. Two of them, at least, were colleagues in the Physics Department, which were on the same floor in Vincent Science Hall as the Department of Chemistry. So no question about the fact they were committed to quality and students, and were themselves dedicated and very human. That was the employment situation that I was seeking.

The changes that I witnessed were almost invisible to anyone who did not purchase, use or maintain any electronic equipment. For a couple of years, we would have to merely approximate requesting sealed bids for equipment repair. In my teaching field, chemical instrumentation, if equipment doesn't work, a laboratory experiment often could not be completed. About a year later my purchase request for a replacement transistor, powering an ultrasonic cleaner, reached the president's office after hanging fire for three months. The purchasing process had started to change. So that was important.

This was important to me as I think I had been hired because I could repair electronic scientific equipment. I recall that I had replaced the power transformer in a--at the time--$20,000 piece of equipment . . . twice [laughter]. The transformer, I think at the time, was about $500 and, you know, an hour and a half of work on my part saw the new transformer installed. So that helped a lot when we had to deal with the usual and regularly recurring budget restrictions.

The second change occurred much greater, during 1986-87, when we convinced the General Services Administration that a special type of lamp, that cost about $125, had a limited useful operating lifetime. We threw them away when they no longer functioned, but the auditors would put an inventory number on them. When they arrived, they physically wanted to view all the lamps we were supposed to have in our possession. We could not produce them.

AB: Of course not.

DT: We could not produce the item, or any of the items, so we showed them our remaining entire supply of lamps, ensuring that they read the expected lifetime on each label. At this point, GSA changed their threshold value on capital equipment to $500, and then began indexing the value according to inflation in the future. GSA had wanted us to account for all items costing more than $100 on a six hundred item list. Most of the items had been purchased between three to fifteen years previously. We didn't, as faculty, have the time or the desire to pursue such trivia. The list shrank to about thirty-five items the following year, and everyone was extremely happy. No, they were gleeful!

AB: [Laughs]

DT: The first few years of summer school had the first semester courses of both General and Organic Chemistry running in the pre-session: three weeks, minus one day for Memorial Day. With fourteen days and two and a half hours of lecture a day, and three and a half hours of laboratory a day, this was a horrendous workload for both the instructor and the students. In the mid-'70s, the three week pre-session and the six week regular session were dropped in favor of two five-week sessions. With our entry into the 21st century, the schedule for the equivalent of studying a full year of chemistry was revised to two four-week sessions. This is still a tough schedule for both students and instructor, in my opinion. But, it's cost-effective in terms of transportation and it does work very well. As a matter of fact, one of the local pharmacists was a student of mine in the summer session. She's a very nice person to know, in the age group that I'm in now.

AB: [Laughs] Yeah, I have to admit that—that two weeks of six hours a day of just Chemistry--that's intense.

DT: Yes, it is intense. It's very tough, yeah.

AB: Oh, wow. And what were your . . . what campus activities were you involved with? Any committees? Anything like that?

DT: Early on, I confined most of my committee activities to dealing with the Department of Chemistry matters. I wound up being largely involved in instrument purchase and instrument maintenance. That did a good job of keeping me very, very busy; and as we acquired more scientific instrumentation each year, the maintenance workload or instrument check for performance capabilities got busy. But I wound up being secretary for department meetings. I forget for how many years I did it, but it was a very, very good experience. I was sort of an illegal secretary for the local Sigma Xi chapter, because I was not a member of Sigma Xi.

AB: Oh really [laughs]?

DT: I also spent a year on the University Promotion Committee--a year as a temporary replacement. During that time, I read *every* application that any faculty member submitted for promotion at that time. And then, I would serve on various short-term *ad hoc* committees.

AB: One of the things that I found when I was researching was with Sigma Xi, the lecture series in the '70s.

DT: Yes.

AB: I found that really interesting, and I have to admit that I don't know if it still goes on.

DT: I don't know either.

AB: I haven't seen anything, but I looked at some of the lecturers you had in, and it was a very impressive list.

DT: It was. I recall one of the speakers was Robert Silverstein, who wrote the . . . was co-author of a book called *Interpreting Infrared Spectra*. It was a significant textbook in chemistry and really very quickly became a classic. It was a wonderful lecture too.

AB: I know I was impressed when Mr. Rittelman, who was a local architect, fairly well-known architect in this area. He came in, in I think it was '74, and talked about solar energy. I thought that was pretty far ahead of the curve.

DT: Before anyone knew what solar energy was. Yeah, very good.

AB: What do you feel were your greatest accomplishments at the school?

DT: Running the planetarium, which became interesting from the standpoint of view that I had had a very long-term interest in photography. I wound up using my own 35 mm film camera, at the time, simply because I knew how it behaved. I look upon the planetarium operation really as applied scientific instrumentation, which with the photography experience, really made it a very easy thing for me to jump into. People might say, "Well, what's a chemist doing running a planetarium?" The answer is, "Well, why not [laughter]?" I had the skill, background, and interest to pursue that type of work.

Then I got involved in the environmental science program back in the late '70s. I also had an opportunity to teach the course, The University: Thinking and Change, and discovered a lot about myself as a consequence. One aspect that I thoroughly enjoyed was finding Chemistry students who were ready to undertake changes of which they did not know they were capable. Being accorded the opportunity to teach basic math, the freshman English courses, Research Writing and Composition, Reading and Composition, Research Writing, and I also taught Aviation Meteorology [laughter]. I think that I undertook the more challenging tasks. The interesting thing is that some of my colleagues wondered for what reason would I teach Aviation Meteorology, but at that time I did have an instrument rating for single engine land aircraft. Before I retired from teaching, I actually did get a seaplane rating . . . at the age of 62, and the instrument rating at the age of 57, which is advanced for earning that type of rating, which people who do fly professionally say is the toughest one there is.

AB: Really?

DT: Yeah.

AB: Could you tell me a little bit more about this class, The University: Thinking and Change?

DT: Yeah, The University: Thinking and Change course was largely the brainchild of Bob Macoskey. It was predicated on pretty sound educational knowledge at the time that the process of education creates conflict within people because it insists that they change; and change is something that human beings are very resistant to. Of course, the process of change you really want to bring out in a person studying in a university environment is you want them to be able to think critically. A lot of students come from an environment where thinking critically simply does not exist. So, the course would explore areas in architecture, art, science, the humanities, history, and use faculty from those areas to sort of serve as special resource people. I recall one of the prerequisites for being accepted by the faculty who were already teaching the course, was to take the Myers-Briggs Type [Indicator] test, which proved to be very interesting because the colleague who administered it, when he came to see my results, he suddenly popped up and said, "Oh my," because I landed exactly on the borderline between an extravert and an introvert. What struck me about that is that I have no discomfort at all in dealing with public speaking. Classroom teaching does that to you.

On the other hand, I do very often enjoy, you know, a degree of solitude and private time. And one of my other colleagues also involved in the program once responded that he simply goes into the classroom and does his act, and to a certain extent that is true. But it's fascinating from the standpoint of view that [pause] I began to understand: one, how I could improve the quality of

my communication, because I tend to work quite intuitively which means I hear something and a conclusion comes out of me that's perfectly valid but nobody understands why. I don't have to understand why because [laughter] because I figured it out. So, that was really quite a vivid experience for me for at least three years until the Department of Academic Support Services decided that this was something that really could be more widely used on campus and they took the program over. We all got fired [laughs].

AB: Oh [laughs]! Of course I think I might know the answer to this, but I definitely want [pause] I am kind of curious as to how a chemistry professor ended up teaching writing and composition.

DT: [pause] Yeah, that's a good question because I found when I entered college, writing was a very, very serious challenge for me on a literary basis. And throughout my undergraduate experience I discovered that I had worked very, very hard on putting together written thoughts. And the extra effort was vindicated because I had to write a paper in Sociology my sophomore year and I got an A minus on the paper. That was basically a consequence of the quality and interpretation of the content, but the expression left something else to be desired. Senior year, I was taking a course--Roman Classics in Translation--and the instructor offered people an incentive, "You can write a paper and if you get a grade of B or better on it, you don't have to take the final exam." Well, you have already discovered that I am open to challenges.

AB: Exactly.

DT: And I did and I got a B minus on the paper. I was very, very happy because I actually was dealing with a literary area of knowledge. Additionally as I went through graduate school, I had to write a master's thesis. I had to take, at that time, a number of examinations which were known as cumulative exams, in which you would learn of the topic a week before the exam.

AB: Oh dear.

DT: It would be independent study on your part and then you would sit down and take the exam, not having the *slightest* idea of what would be on the exam. Well, out of nine exams we had to pass six. The first three I was not successful on; the next six I was completely successful. And when I went from Wesleyan University to the University of Connecticut, my research advisor, who was a proud son of England, insisted that students write papers in each of the courses which he taught. I think I took three courses from him and had a seminar course as well. So, I started getting a lot of experience writing papers in the sciences. And when I came to the dissertation, including figures, my dissertation was two hundred and ninety pages long . . . which is one of the reasons why it took me two years to finish it.

I looked on my experience as something, well, you know, "if I had to work extra hard on this type of thing, how can I make students' lives in college easier in the long run for them [laughs], but also encourage a little of productive suffering along the way?" So, I would require them to write a paper in each of the advanced courses that I taught: Analytical Chemistry and Chemical Instrumentation.

Soon the *Writing Across the Curriculum* requirement came along and I volunteered to be the department *Writing Across the Curriculum* person. I had my students put in their extensive papers that met that requirement. And I have not heard of any complaints in the long run.

AB: Honestly, I think it's a great idea. I mean, right now there's the big push on what they call STEM, which is just the science, the tech, the engineering, and the math. I do sometimes wonder if maybe the writing aspect falls along the wayside. So, I am glad that it was brought together.

DT: Well [pause] one of the great benefits out of the Reading and Composition and Research Writing courses for me was that I think during the course of the semester, I would have students write about a 500-word paper on a weekly basis. So by the end of the first course, I would have read about 300,000 words. One thing I did discover was that my reading speed markedly increased, and it was already quite up there. Secondly, out of a class of twenty-four students, I'd find that one student in each of the two classes at that time, was a born writer. I mean, that really thrilled me because, gee, here is a person who inherently knows how to write effectively, and well, and clearly, and so on. About three or four students out of the class really had serious problems writing, which may--and I don't know exactly what the answer is--but may have had a problem reading.

Research Writing was a different ball of wax by that time. Some degree of filtration had occurred, and it was mainly getting people brought into the realm of "How do you find information?" and at that time, the internet had not developed to the extent that it did. Sites that were of dubious quality for information had not been fully identified, and in retrospect, I might say that [pause] Wikipedia, in at least the technical and scientific areas, is surprisingly good because only the people who have the knowledge that is appropriate there do contribute to it. As a matter of fact, I have actually contributed to it as well.

AB: Oh wow.

DT: Yeah.

AB: I just also wanted to ask you, what do you think were your best and worst teaching moments while you were here.

DT: Well, one of the best moments was in thirty-five years of running chemistry laboratories [pause] I never had an accident occur to any one of my students. The irony is when I was an undergraduate that I had two of those incidents. The interesting thing is that because I wore corrective glasses for a long time, they caught the brunt of the "ceremony." The second thing is seeing students make discoveries about their capabilities and be able to both discover and turn those capabilities from dreams to reality on a regularly recurring basis. That has to be the close second best thing to safety.

The worst situation occurred in late 1969, when the president at that time, Albert Watrel, told the Chemistry Department to buy the best nuclear magnetic resonance spectrometer that was available. At that time, I had no tenure and I was not even a full assistant professor. Sinking an elevator was the worst moment [laughs]. I figured I would be on the road within the year. Well,

the magnet for the instrument weighed 4,400 pounds and the elevator had a placard indicating a capacity of 4,000 pounds and I figured, "Oh, that'll work." So, we loaded the magnet onto the elevator and I am pressing the up button. The elevator sank by twelve feet into the Vincent Science Hall basement. It took a chain fall hoist and an elevator repair technician to raise the elevator the necessary eight inches to get the magnet into the basement of Vincent Science Hall. That was really a much better location because of the lack of vibration. Actually, the source of vibration we had, it took us a total of ten years to solve.

AB: Really?

DT: Yeah, yeah, yeah it was because people would not listen to us [laughs] . . . and the problem with the vibration was that a piece of sound-deadening insulation in the housing of one of the ventilating blowers was stuck on the rotor. The rotor would vibrate, and you could feel the floor of the instrument room going up and down with changing amplitude with respect to time because all the blowers would blow in the instrument room. So, we turned out to be quite lucky with that particular incident and I was very surprised, very pleased when I did not get [laughs] when I did not receive opportunity to go elsewhere.

AB: We're very glad that you didn't either; we're very glad that you stayed [laughs]. When you first arrived here back I think in '68, who were the leaders, the president, the deans; who was in charge of the union?

DT: Robert Carter was the president who was about to be deposed when I was interviewing in March of '68. Robert Lowry was the interim president until Albert Watrel was selected. Al Schmittlein was the dean for Arts and Sciences, and I don't recall . . . the name of an academic vice-president, if we had one at that time. We didn't have a bargaining agent at that time. The Faculty Assembly, which is primarily an advisory body as near as I can tell, was chaired by Murray Shellgren of the department of Biology.

I never met President Carter. He had departed before I had ever arrived. Dr. Schmittlein, a hard negotiator, was wearing a lot of hats for the School of Arts and Sciences, which had only recently been created. Professor Shellgren was an able, respected leader, carefully pointing out the situation that faculty were going to face as college and faculty expansion was taking place. Of course in '68, we had about 3,500 students; enrollment was predominantly the area of health, physical education and so on. The sciences were just getting started with the Department of Chemistry being created I think in--certainly by 1967, possibly 1966.

AB: Okay and who are the other people here who influenced you or were significant in your time here?

DT: Well, the influential people at Slippery Rock for me were W. G. Sayre and, that is his legal name now, and Melvin Willis from Chemistry. These gentlemen opened me to seeing situations in life much more broadly, and then Monte Holland, Brian Kearney, James Fearday, and Ben Shaevitz in Physics. To me, the members of the Department of Physics always seemed much more concerned with both the ethics and morality of academic teaching and personnel situations.

Robert Macoskey in Philosophy: eloquent oratory used most effectively to advance a (which was his) holistic view of society, culture, and environment. Mike and Penny Kelly in English: these faculty supported my unexpected candidacy to teach first-year English courses during a period when Chemistry enrollment was running low. And Henry Lenz in Education opened me to the world of international travel and cultural customs. Mike Wartel (Dean, Natural Sciences and Math '76 to 1982), he unequivocally supported the development of the planetarium as the Rocket Room, as a public relations tool to further connect to the public at large. Glen Brunken, James Myford, and Bob Crayne**,** Art introduced to me to some of the fundamental principles of art that apply so well to daily life and I am sad to say that surprising number of those gentlemen are no longer living.

AB: I have to admit that I recognize a lot of these names, and not just Robert Macoskey, who obviously has the center named after him over across the way, but I see a lot of names because I am a Slippery Rock kid myself. And so a lot of these names are either names of people I went to school with or the last names I think maybe their wives were my teachers.

DT: Yeah.

AB: So it is very interesting to see "Oh . . . of course, the wives were teachers because the husbands were professors. What were the [pause] what were the major events or activities that went on while you were here? I am sure I mean you were here for quite a while [laughter].

DT: [Laughs] And I still am!

AB: So, I am sure you have seen a lot of different things. So, maybe just give some examples of those.

DT: Yeah. Well, the student affiliate chapter of the American Chemical Society ran a *Meeting in Miniature* in the early '70s, that to me as the faculty advisor, was an unbelievable success both in the content of the work presented by students and the quality of the organizational structure for the meeting itself. I have never seen anything go so smoothly in my life, especially when there was absolutely no prior experience [laughs].

AB: [Laughs] Could you maybe describe that? Because when you say "Meeting in Miniature," I just picture little, tiny miniatures of people and I know that's not what it is [laughs].

DT: No, [laughs] The American Chemical Society has two annual meetings--two semi-annual meetings a year, very large meetings in major cities. For any one particular hour, there may be somewhere between five to ten different talks being given in twenty minute segments.

AB: Okay.

DT: So, you are looking at [pause] let's see, fifteen to thirty different sessions going on at one time. So, a *Meeting in Miniature* is a student version of the same thing except for the . . . you know, three to eight meetings going on, perhaps for a half hour at a time or so. Then you have to arrange for lunch for people, you have a keynote speaker, and it's the challenge of getting

everybody to the right place at the right time, putting the program together so people can make intelligent decisions and not feel that everything they want to hear they have been excluded from. So, it was just an unbelievable experience to watch students handle, and I always took the idea that the student advisor was basically the liaison between the student organization and the University. The challenge there was to simply arrange for students to be able to talk to the right people to achieve whatever goals they needed. I did not take a role deliberately where I *ran* the operation. I'd advise, I'd answer questions and make suggestions, but the final decisions were up to them.

And during a couple of summers, and this was back in the '80s, we had an on campus festival that went beyond all expectations for a cultural high. We had ultra-light aircraft flying, tentative hot air balloon rides, and concerts by the Pittsburgh Symphony Orchestra as conducted by Morton Gould. Living just off the northeast corner of the campus, as I do, I had a terrifically convenient ringside seat for all of this, and I really miss having a continuation of that event.

Then we had the three winters of '76-'77, '77-'78, and '78-'79. These made any winters before or since seem like this is the tropics. Twelve foot high snow drifts soared on the west side of Harmony Road, and I spent thirty of forty-five days in '76-'77 blowing snow out of my driveway. In '78 the drive home became a one hour nightmare as cars were unable to make the northbound climb on the hill by Mihalik-Thompson Stadium. Back then I was driving front-wheel drive Saab and could climb almost any slope. Nobody else could. Many would start up the hill and then do a reverse random slide downhill. By the time I reversed direction to drive through downtown Slippery Rock, I arrived home after an hour on the road [laughs].

AB: Oh dear.

DT: And as far as national events that occurred during '68 through 2003, I don't really recall any significant campus reaction, and perhaps that's because my office location didn't give me a very good view of the campus, if or when any student protests might have occurred. When I arrived in 1968, the lower campus contained only Vincent and the World Cultures Building, later named Spotts. From '72 on, upon every three years a new building project: the University Union, Bailey Library, N. Kerr Thompson Stadium (now Mihalik-Thompson Stadium), Eisenberg Classroom Building, Boozel Cafeteria, the new Art Building completely rebuilt from its previous life as [pause] slightly renovated from the previous union and bookstore, Swope Music Building, the Art Sculpture Building, the Aebersold Recreation Center, Egli Soccer Field, Storm Harbor Equestrian Center, a complete set of new dormitories and apartments, and Critchfield Park. At times little activity seemed occurring on the campus. However, given an opportunity for thought, the campus was surprisingly busy with construction, nothing was constant.

AB: [Chuckles] I just wanted to jump back a little bit [pause] we're going to skip on . . . well we are not going to skip but we will get to the next question. I just wanted to maybe skip back a little bit and talk about your time with the Rocket Room, with the planetarium. I know you said that you came into it out of your love of photography [pause] and I just wanted to . . .what I really just wanted to know is how . . . successful was it within the community, at the college and with the community at large?

DT: It's really hard to say in many respects. I was not the first choice as the person to run it, but basically, according to Dean Wartel at the time, he really wanted someone who was more involved with astronomy, but the astronomy people in the Physics Department weren't that comfortable with the ancillary tasks involved with the [pause] that would be involved with the planetarium. I wound up getting involved in it because it involved an awful lot of electronic and electrical work. In other words, we completely wired the planetarium to operate all of the special effects projectors. We had to run an immense amount of cabling, build a shelf to hold the equipment, which was the best approach that we could achieve at the time. The fundamental idea behind the planetarium was to use it as a public relations tool. Mike Wartel sold this idea very effectively to the administration at the time and it [pause] it worked out.

We would run two planetarium shows a week, Thursday nights and Saturday nights. During Christmas season, we would run a--for planetariums--a very traditional Christmas story, "The Star of the East." We would run daytime programs for [pause] for elementary and high school classes coming in. The first six and a half or so years went very well with getting our word out to people. One member of the Public Relations office at that time was very good at taking copy that I submitted and getting it out into newspapers around the area. Then that person departed, and then it suddenly started going downhill. I never saw so many errors occur in public information published regarding the planetarium in my life. That's really what brought it to an end because we became totally undependable, unpredictable for people. So, that was . . . while information entered the public realm effectively well, reliably, we developed quite a following; but when stuff became challenging that was moving toward the end. I simply could not handle that type of situation.

AB: Understandable. It's a shame because I thought it was . . . I found it to be a very interesting program. I found it to be, again, a very good PR move with the community at large. That's actually really upsetting. Are there other memorable events or maybe other things that really stand out to you during your time here?

DT: Given enough time I could probably enumerate almost every one of them but I am not going to [laughs].

AB: [Laughs] What if anything do you miss about working and being a professor here?

DT: Well, I miss students. I miss interacting with colleagues. I don't miss the administrative or collecting bargaining unit required tasks, and only the development of the word processor made the repetitive five year task of preparing a self-evaluation tolerable. It's simply because you could edit and add very, very easily. But that was the major problem: the collective bargaining unit, knowing how things were done prior to the presence of the faculty [union] APSCUF. I could see potential problems arising of a significant nature if we had not had APSCUF. On the other hand, I realize that . . . actually encouraged faculty and the administration to work somewhat more closely together too.

AB: And just to wrap up, what words of wisdom do you have for the Slippery Rock community or how would you like to be remembered?

DT: Well, be human [laughs]. Every and each student deserves a reasonable hearing; so do colleagues. Try to learn continuously. Whatever new that you learn does not necessarily have to have a strong direct connection to academia. New knowledge changes your mental flexibility and enhances overall perspectives on everything.

AB: Well Dave, thank you so much for coming in. I think . . .

DT: You're welcome.

AB: Thank you. I really appreciate it.