

ORAL HISTORY

"SLIPPERY ROCK UNIVERSITY IN THE SIXTIES"

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GUESTS: DR. DOUGLAS CLINGER

MS. GAY VELA

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R: We're going to reminisce about Dr. Wright's relationship with the college, the community, and the Russell Wright Fitness Center. We have a special guest. His daughter, Gay Vela, is sitting in with us.

BR: Would you want to start with when you first came to the Slippery Rock area?

W: Well, I think that might be well. Yes. Who was the guy that just died up at Grove City last year. Headland. I think you said maybe you would like to talk about some of the people like Miss ^{Dr. Blaisdel. English Professor} Mary Blaisdel, Hamm, Murphy, Eisenberg, Vincent, and Headland, and Thompson, of course. Those are ones that I had, naturally, dealings with, and had these people all as instructors. Some of the tales about them. I told him (Clinger) one this morning about old Dr. Hamm and building a house, and he was a ham. There's a couple other stories about the Amish and football and so on, if you like those in there. They're both semi-humorous stories and kind of true facts about Slippery Rock early days.

R: Good. I think that's a grand place to start.

W: I might preface this by a little bit. I've always had, not always, but 95% of the time in my life I've always had good luck. Even as a kid when I was six years old, I did a little marketing and I got a little older, about eight, I did some more, and I always had a bank account. I was never in the red. I had a little business at six, had a business at eight, and I had a little business of some kind all my life. The things that've happened to me that I felt were sometimes a kick down, but I found out that they were a kick up. Even in professional school, and all the way through internships, in surgery and so on, the breaks as I look back I couldn't ask for anything that were on the kick down but where I couldn't get back up and succeed by it. So I look back on life from on the farm, country school, teaching a couple years in the country school, going through and studying medicine, and playing ball, the things that have happened all the way through have certainly been more than one can expect. And most of the time when I had to do something that I didn't think was so important, it turned out to be the most important thing, probably, in my life at that particular time. It just kept moving on from there. So I might start back, preface it a little bit, to the time before I came to Slippery Rock. Would that be all right? You're a writer and an editor. You would know. I am no writer. I am no editor.

W: I have never been accused of being able to write or spell.

Although my mother would say, quicker, and she would pound that into you, but every night we had to sit down at the dining room table like this and we had to make a's or o's or circles, and I could write my name as well as I do today when I went to country school. So that was the thing that gave me the break here that I could write. The thing that gave me the break here was that I was forced to do something I didn't want to do, and they thought I was a good student. Stupid as all get out, but there were two things I could do. I could write probably as well as anybody at Slippery Rock, and I knew Latin as well or better than anybody in the class.

We lived on a farm. Things were pretty tough. I thought they were. We always had plenty to eat. Clothing, so on. We never had any money, but we were like all the other people farming around there. Nobody had any. So we had a barn. They kept the manure outside, and the water would wash it down over our garden, and along the road grew horseradish. Horseradish in the spring would come out, and get half as high as I was. So I decided, there was a mining camp not far from here, that I would sell horseradish. So I got the horseradish. Dug it. Scraped it. Washed it. My mother helped me, and I found out where I could get bottles for two cents with a nice cap on them. So I capped them in the nice little bottle. So I went into the horseradish

business. So I peddle it in my little basket. I got ten cents a bottle for the horseradish, but they complained it was too strong. So I said to my Dad, and he never said no to me in his life that I can ever recall, what'll I do, Dad? Well, you ought to be able figure that out. I said, well, I can't. Well, he said, down there we have a bin of turnips. Now, he said, they're white, you peel them good, and you take your horseradish which is too strong and you take the same amount of horseradish and the same amount of turnips and you mix it and that will cut the strength by fifty percent. So I did, and my sales were much better. But still some people complained. I said, what'll I do now. He said, take that last one and cut it with one more and call one your super, and call one your regular, and call one your mild. So I did that and I had three kinds of horseradish, and my mild or this one outsold this one so the more I sold of these ones the better it was. So then I said if they kept the bottle and kept it nice and not with a cork or anything, I give them two cents on their next sale so they could get the next bottle for eight cents. So that was my first business. So the next business was we grew apples, and we have these things. Our garden looked like a bunch of pyramids in the winter. You remember when we stored apples in the garden? We'd hand pick the apples, and then this is our garden, and we would pile the straw there, here, here and maybe there would be eight or ten piles of straw. Then we

W: would hand pick the apples and pile them up in a nice pyramid. When it got frosty, when it got cold and started to freeze, we covered them with dirt, and when it started to get really zero, or getting down colder, we'd put manure all over the top of them, and that would steam on there because of the manure. So we kept those, and then in this pyramid we dug a little hole down in here, and the apples would roll down to there, and then I could carry a peck basket which I asked all of our kids, all of those graduates, how much a peck was and not a damn soul knew what a peck was. Well, it was a quarter of a bushel, and I could carry that many, that was ten pounds, that's forty pounds of apples in a bushel, and I would take that and then put them down, take them in and clean them. My mother would always help wash them and shine them, and then I would peddle apples, and believe it or not, I got twenty-five cents for a peck of apples then, and years later with orchards I wasn't making twenty-five cents a peck when I was picking 75,000 bushels of apples. But anyway that was my next business. So I always peddled apples and horseradish, and those were my businesses to get my clothes and so on until I was old enough to run a trap line.

BR: Where was your farm?

W: Up in Jackson Township, Jackson Center. Just about six miles beyond Grove City. I started and went through grade school, and of course my mother couldn't wait to we got home to see who

W: won the awards. I recall once I spelled it down in spelling, but I was the last one and the end of the line and it was spelled every other way and so I got it. But in all the time I went there I could only figure that she was so disappointed that I could not spell. But I did win once in a while the writing award. So that pleased her. So now I get through. I took the eighth grade when I was in seventh and I passed it. A country school. You could go to high school then so I was going to go to high school. I was thirteen so I was going to go to Grove City. I went for about a couple of weeks, I guess, and got my books and I had to ride a horse to the railroad which was about two miles, and then turn the horse around and give him a bat to tell him to go home and then walk down the track a mile to get the eight o'clock train. I had to leave home at seven o'clock, get the eight o'clock train into Grove City and take the late train home at night. So it was practically dark when I left in the fall and it was dark when I got home. So Dad said, no boy's going to do that. You don't need to go to school. My mother said, he is going to school. So we had a country school. She said, you go back to country school and Glenna Robbins is the teacher and she's a graduate of Oberlin and she'll teach you algebra and Latin. So she took me up there and she said, Russ will be your janitor, and that boomer stove over there, I looked at it, pot-bellied

W: boomer stove. That's the kind we had in the schoolhouse. So I had to feed the stove and sweep the place out. I was the janitor, and she'd teach me then, but she said, I don't know anything about algebra, and I can't add. I don't know anything about it at all, but I'll teach you Latin. Knowing my mother, she was a dictator. You didn't think about what she said. She said what you are going to do, and that was law. So I went back. So about Thanksgiving or before that we finished the first year Latin. I said, what do we do now? She said, we'll read Caesar. What will we do now, after about a couple of months. We'll read Cicero. Well, what do we do now? We'll read Virgil. So for a full year I did nothing but do Latin and so I thought it was a great waste of time. But she said, I'm packing you off to Slippery Rock this next fall. So no money and I had to get down here, get a job waiting tables or do something. I didn't have any money. But I came down in short pants. Fourteen years old. Registered at Slippery Rock. Got a job. Started. So I went to Latin class, and ^{(My Country School Teacher} she said to me, now when you go to Latin class Miss Mary is probably one of finest Latin teachers, she's Italian decent, in this area of the country, and she said, you'll take Latin from her. I said, will I ask for some credit. She said, don't be stupid. Just go in there and sit like all the other kids that are going to sit in there and when she asks a question that nobody can answer, just put your hand up halfway and say, could

W: this be right, Miss Mary. She said, if you're wrong I'll haunt you. Well, anyhow, they thought I was smart. Here's a dumb kid from the country don't know twice, and here I was the best one in Latin class, and I could write the ^{than any one} better. Then the doctors that examined all the ones going out for football, we all went for football. There were only about forty or fifty boys so everybody went out some time. So I could write and so the doctor wanted someone who could write. So I filled all the forms out when he did that. I was his assistant right away. Most people thought if they had some problem and they're busy with the doctor, and I seemed to be his attache, so they would talk to me about it. So I automatically became the assistant to the doctor making out the sheets. So I'd listen to how he made them all out. I didn't know what blood pressure ought to be. I knew I had been awfully sick with rheumatic fever and was forbidden to play any sports, but I wanted to. You didn't worry about dying. You worried about not being able to play ball. So when he said, that's a very fine blood pressure, 110 over 80, well, that's what it was. He had so many of these guys to look over at least 33 that were out there in suits, he didn't know who he'd seen or who he hadn't seen. He probably got three or five dollars for examining the whole football team. So I turned mine in, and mine was always a little bit dishonest but mine was always just right perfect. Heart was good. Lungs were good. Everything else was just

W: perfect. So from that I got to carry the first aid box when he was here, and if anybody needed a bandaid, I had it. That was my interest in medicine. As I look back, it was because of that. Then we were going to have a play. I didn't know whether to get in it. I didn't know if getting in a play was honorable or dishonorable or what. Everybody would congratulate me. I was selected for the play, and I couldn't imagine why. Well, it was because everybody knew that I was the best student in Latin. Never breathed a word that I'd ever had a day of Latin before. I'll never forget the play. The play was "Thirteen Soap, Unlucky for Dirt". So I had a flagpole with a sign on it, and when the curtain rolled up, I ran across the stage with this flag, and I was all through. I'd completed my part in the play. And as I say, being able to write, being able to assist the doctor, making me the chief custodian of the band-aid kit, and splints and tape, and naturally since I had it, there was nobody else there, I would wrap it on the best way I know how, and I'd been kicked around some so I had some idea, and with Coach Thompson showing me, why, I became the unofficial assistant for the doctor when I was 14 in football. That created an interest in medicine. After playing ball here for, and I never was very good, I didn't know why I couldn't run. I could run fast, probably from here out across the road or something like that, but all the

W: valves in my heart leaked and I didn't know that. But I think the only thing that kept me alive was trying. I'm 88, and I was supposed to never live till I became 15. I had this rheumatic fever when I was eight so bad. I think keeping me alive and with my interest in sports, you get exercise that you need instead of sitting down. I think I'd probably have died if I had followed the directions that I was supposed to do. But I went out and played ball. As I say I'm not good. The biggest job I did was carry the band-aid box and carry the medical box to put mercurochrome on somebody or put a band-aid on them, but it was all of those things working together. I went out for ball, and I played quite a bit of baseball when I came here to the Normal school, 1919. In 1921 it changed to Slippery Rock State Teachers College. So they didn't know what to do with a bunch of us. There was a kid by the name of Ellenberger, same size and age as I was, and Joe Moore and "Hoosie" Gold and myself. I followed these guys along. Ellenberger became superintendent of schools down in the Pittsburgh area. Joe Moore was principal of Warren Junior High School. He got his Ph.D. out of Pittsburgh later on. He's now dead. Gold, his father was a dentist, he studied dentistry, and I studied medicine. This was the group. We were all about 14. They let us go on through and tutored us. So we had enough work with the tutoring and so on that they let us enter the state teachers college at the end of the second year. So by end of four

W: years we had graduated, all of us, and we also had credit for two years of college work, although we'd only been here four years. One thing we used to do was race in the dining room. Eisenberg was the president at that time. Their table was up about two feet higher than the rest of the tables in the dining hall, in the women's dorm there, and then, as you know, they always set the tables with ten at a table and one of the instructors at the head, then there would be two seniors, two juniors, two sophomores, and then they would maybe mix the others up. So you had 20 people to wait on, each one of us. So we would race to see who had to set those tables up for breakfast and run to get the dishes in the dishwasher. So we would race out the thing. And he had been watching us. So one day, one of us bunged "Hoosie" Gold, and down went his dishes and smashed 20 plates and whatever he had on the thing. So the next morning we got a call to come in and see Eisenberg. "Hoosie" said it was an accident. Yes, he said, I'm sure you didn't do it on purpose, but I've been watching you. You four guys have been racing. I don't know where Ellenberger was. He didn't get mixed up in the thing. He said, Joe Moore, you and "Hoosie" have been racing to get through that door. Now accidents are half on purpose. So, he said, those dishes that you got on that tray will cost the college eight dollars wholesale. Now since accidents are half on purpose, the college will pick up four dollars. He said, "Hoosie," you were carrying the

W: tray, and you are going to pay two, and Joe Moore, you were racing with them and you are going to pay one, and Russ Wright you were racing and you are going to pay one. I have always thought of his analogy. So it was pretty hard to raise that dollar, but you had to give that. I think I paid a quarter of each weeks' pay. But he collected it right down to the penny, and you paid him at the office.

One thing I might add is this teaching in a country school. I think there were six first grade students that had never been to school before, and they sat on the front row. Then when I would recite, I would go up there. She was a graduate and music major with a minor in languages from Oberlin and she had graduated summa cum laude. She had two uncles that lived down in there. One was on the school board and of all the people to put into teaching at a country school, she knew the least about anything else, but she was willing to learn. She lived in Grove City and wrote a book on herself and had become a very fine speaker and did a lot of religious speaking here. I saw her up until about ten years ago. Anyhow, these little kids would all sit there and being an excellent music student, she had a fine voice, she sang all the endings. Like a, ae, ai, am, a, the ends of Latin. You know Latin has 10 endings on each noun. Five singular, five plural. So we'd sing, like tuba is the word

W: for trumpet, tuba, tubae, tubae, tubam, tuba, tubae, tubarum, tubis, tubas, tubis, and all these little kids would be sitting there. We'd sing the declension and those damn little kids, six years old, everyone of them could sing every one of those declensions. They'd sing too, tuba, tubae, tubae, tubam. They learned vocabulary. I think they learned Latin as well as I did and all six years old, kids that had never been in a school room before. It taught me something about humanity.

The next year I pedaled out to Slippery Rock and I got a job. Going on, the first thing was I wanted to go out for football. We all did. We were all like pint-size. We were all the same age, fourteen years old. Imagine going out for football at 14. You couldn't even go out for high school football, but Coach Thompson never humiliated you, and he was this broad, and his hand was like a vise when you put it in there. So sitting here filling out these forms and being a new one, I looked up there and the first team got new suits. The second team got the suits that were thrown off from last year. The third team got the scrub suits that they were the scrubs last year and the shoes were broken and the toes were out of them, but there were still two nice shoes there. They were a nice pair of shoes. I hoped those would be there by the time I got there. Well, at last I got through and turned in the thing. Zephiropolous was the only

W: one behind me and he couldn't write at all, so anyhow, I got the shoes and one was size seven and one size nine. We were having running. We used to be up there on the hill and race for who was the fastest.

C: That's the baseball field that used to be used for football practice.

W: I could always win the 100. I probably was running as fast as anybody in the whole school when I came here. My Dad was always a real fast runner. We were running down there, and Coach Thompson always had his eyes open. He looked at me and said, Russ, have you got a deformed foot? How can you run with a deformed foot? I said, no, should I say my shoes are deformed or my feet didn't grow the right size for these shoes? You know, he got me a pair of shoes. ~~He got me a pair of shoes.~~ Unbelievable!

C: Probably out of his own pocket.

W: I'm sure it didn't come from anywhere else. Then we were getting beat badly one day, and "Hoosie" Gold, you had to run with him and sometimes he could beat me if it was a far distance. He had more air than I did. So he said to "Hoosie, we were getting beat so bad, we are going to kick off. We had to kick it. Go down to those fellows. The first one down there, knock it out of his hands, see if you can knock it out, and so he did and I caught it. So the first football game I ever saw I played in and scored a touchdown. Now it was an awful long time coming for a second

W: one. Coach Thompson always used to make some remarks. One day he said, I can lick anybody in this whole world. And when he put that big vice hand up there on his shoulders, he was an All-American from Ursinus College. I said, Coach, that's a big statement. He said, oh, it is. I said, how would you do it? He said, you keep fighting one minute after the other guy quits. But that's just some of his philosophy.

In working with Thompson, in the half, he prepared. He always prepared his team well. As Doug knows so well, so many men will stand five minutes in preparation of their team and an hour the next day explaining how they are down on their luck. He prepared the team and what you knew. When you went in between the halves, if you were making a mistake and he saw it, and it was something you could do with it, he pointed it to you or any one of them and what was happening and why they were successful, but he never tried to teach you how to play football between the halves. That was a kind of a time that you were to go out and feel better. We came in one day and we were getting the tar beat out of us. He sat there and laughed. Everybody was jittery, and I don't think they could have caught a ball if they had it thrown right to them. Apparently they just couldn't hold it. So he had to do something to loosen this team up. So he told this story. The other day, at the opening of school this year, a woman came up from down Butler way in her two

W: seater tin lizzie touring car with black robes on. That was all dirt road, dust flying. Everybody who had a car had a dust robe. She come up to put her girl into school, and she's turning around the old gym on Kiester Road. She came out and there was this fellow sitting there, an Amish guy. She said to him, she wanted her daughter to come home from school on the train. So where is the station, sir? He took his finger and pointed out Kiester Road, and he said, out there. She said, how far is it? Oh, he said, it's about five or six miles. She said, why did they put the station way out there? Well, he said, I reckon because the track is out there. He loosened those guys up and they went out and beat the tar out of the other team. He took all that jitteriness away.

What was the coach's name we talked about this morning at Michigan? .. yost (Hurry up yost)

C: Yost.

W: Yost. Hurry Up Yost. That's what we always called him. Michigan has always been a great rival with Ohio State, and I thought how much Yost was like Coach Thompson the way he figured out some way that he would get the better of you in some manner. So the Yost team at Michigan was not near as good as Ohio State. Ohio State could win everybody. Michigan could only win some. There's two tunnels that come out on to the field at the stadium, and Yost waited till Ohio State was all in this tunnel, and they were all

W: loitering along, just walking out, and then he waits till they get into the right thing and then he sends his whole squad out screaming and yelling to high heaven. They run on the field out past him. They're so jittery that he scored three touchdowns in the first quarter before they got their feet on the ground and beat them. Thompson had these kinds of tricks too. I want to tell you one thing about him. One day I think he gained the respect and courage of every man that played football on that team. We were playing somebody and at that time you lined up right on the line, you pulled your tackle and your end and brought them in the inside so you had your center and guard. That's all you had next to the line there. So he lined up the guard and the tackle and brought his other over here. There was only way we figured he could go so we all blocked that way. This guy came up the thing. Somebody hit him. We had the ball and we come right up here. They were all scattered out here so the coach said, shoot right into here and knock these guys out of here and go right up through here. So this is what we were going to do but our man stepped on the line right there. You had one umpire or referee or whatever you call them that's all there was and he couldn't see everything. The coach saw him step on the line and he scored. I saw it and several of our players if you walked along the line, they saw it. Half a dozen of us saw it. Coach called that play and called it back. That type of honesty, of sincerity, to give up a score

W: that they needed, I think he demanded the admiration of everybody that knew him. That's what he did. He was so good to me. I missed one point here. I had told you about going down and scoring the first football game I ever saw or ever played in and I didn't know how to fall, and I fell and laid on my back and the guy stepped in my mouth and knocked those two ^{PIRORY} teeth out. Now I had been forbidden to play any sports, and I didn't know what to do. Now it was going to be time to go home at Thanksgiving. I went down to the dentist down here and he had to put two peg teeth in there for me before I went home so I could go home. In sports, going through most of them, and I had been physician for 18 years with the Tigers, and I was 25 years with the international weightlifting, and with our weightlifting team, the Olympic committee. You will find probably that there are rebels in every profession and everything else, but you'll never find a much better assortment of people than you'll find in sports. Don't you think that's true?

C: True.

W: You get what you earn. You earn it, and you expect it, and you are willing to train for it. Doug has done such a tremendous job on this book. We've all got our name on it, but he's the guy that started the work. His experience over all of these years of teaching high school, and training and coaching and physical education, and looking over theses and

- W: helping people through school and lending a hand. He is another Coach Thompson. He has all the qualities that the coach had.
- C: Would you want to share with them the story of how they started to announce the Slippery Rock scores at the Michigan stadium?
- W: Yes. My wife was a friend of Doc Holland. Doc Holland was not a physician. He was the chief paint salesman to the Ford Motor car company. How he ever got that name, I don't know. He and Ty Tyson graduated in the same class at Penn State, and they both came to Detroit. So that's when station WWJ radio was just getting going, and so he hired out with WWJ and what's his name went to Ford selling their paint and he became pretty much the paint top salesman for the Ford Motor Car Company. So when you're talking about selling paint, you're not selling a gallon, you're selling a million gallons at a shot. Anyhow, they were good close friends. And when you went out to the ball game at Ann Arbor, that's when I was interning, that would be 1929 or 1930, right in that area, you went out to the stadium and then they had a little cupola up there, not much more equipment than what you have right here, and then they did the broadcasting from up there. So they always were giving me the business about being from Slippery Rock. The other side of the tracks, why didn't I go to a college, if you can't go to college, go to Slippery Rock. Why did you go there, you couldn't go to college, giving you this rib and Slippery Rock probably is getting beat 50-0 today and

W: then they'd use they're name and play Indiana and California and they'd think their a great school. Just rubbing this in and so on. So this day I started giving it back, and it's between the halves when they're doing this thing and they give me this business, and so help me, the thing [microphone] was open. So at that point all the air over the country heard about Slippery Rock, and that's how Slippery Rock games and numbers started to be announced at the games and that's how the Slippery Rock name became known to the University of Michigan.

V: At ^{U of Michigan} Michigan State they always announce the scores.

W: They still do.

C: They pretty much do it all over the country.

W: Now I'll come back to Slippery Rock, and I'd like to talk a little bit about some of the faculty. Miss Mary here was a Latin teacher who was a delightful person. Herb Vincent became principal of the high school, but his wife was an art teacher, and she and Miss Mary were very close friends. So since I could write and knew Latin, Mrs. Vincent thought I must be a pretty good student of some kind. Then she thought I could do some art, but she found out right away that she had made a mistake, but it did give me an entree to her husband which finally became the assistant coach, and he was down at the Model School. They had a Slippery Rock high school at that time, but that was held in the Model School. That was the high school. Then Headland was

W: the head of the Model School for teacher training. That's where I did ~~a year of~~ practice teaching under Headland down there. But through Vincent and Miss Mary, again here I come back, I got all the breaks in the world. I wasn't a good student. Here I was young. I didn't understand a lot of things, but they gave me the advantage of everything that there was coming along. Now another guy we had was very interesting. His name was Hamm. He was a character. He taught psychology. I often think back yet today, I don't know whether he was good or bad, but he sat there and he always looked like he had Limburger cheese on his lip. He looked like he hated everybody including himself. I'm sure he did me because I'd write but I couldn't spell. I think if he didn't do any other papers he'd check my paper over, and so he read it because every other word was misspelled. So he'd mark them all in red. He said, you know, I'm thinking about flunking you. I said, well, you wouldn't do it would you? He said, don't challenge me. Well, anyhow, he didn't. But he was up in age, pretty good age, maybe 60, and he had never had a nice house. So he decided he was going to build the perfect home. He must have drawn plans for a half a dozen houses and they were all either too expensive or there was something he couldn't agree on with the contractor, but finally he got a contractor to build a house. He said to this contractor, now if the fire place, he didn't have a fireplace, he loved a fireplace, don't work, I won't pay you. The guy said,

W: when I build a house, the fireplace works. So he did good work. Built him a nice house. But he wouldn't give him the ten percent. He had held back ~~ten percent~~. He said, I'm not going to pay you the ten percent till I see the fireplace working. The contractor said, if you give me the ten percent the fireplace will work. They argued about this for months. So finally he said, I know what he's got to do. Well, Hamm went over and built a fire in the fireplace, and it just filled the house full of smoke. He said, you know I knew that fireplace wouldn't work. So he got himself a ladder, as old as he is, climbs up on the roof, looks down and he can see daylight right through. He said, I knew it wouldn't work. So they get together again and he said, if you give me the ten percent, the fireplace will work. So Coach Thompson gets into it and said, what's in it. It's deadlocked. Coach says, tell you what you do, what's the ten percent of the money? Okay, I'll put it in this hand. Now, if the fireplace works, I'll give it to the contractor. If it don't, I give it back to you. Said, that's fair enough. So now the contractor gets a ladder and he gets up on the house, but he takes a rock with him about this big and plunks it down through. That bugger had put a glass across the fireplace so it wouldn't work. So he got his money. He knocked the thing out and he put some kindling in there and, whew, up she goes. And so the coach had to hand over the ten percent. That's the kind of esteem that Coach Thompson was held ~~in~~. If it was an

W: argument, he was the moderator. Like what do we call that in baseball today? They sit down and a guy tries to tell them what they're going to take. Anyhow, he was the moderator in practically everything. We had a history teacher by the name of Murphy. The best story teller, I think I have never heard one better before or since. He taught English history and everybody loved to go in to hear his jokes. Now they rang the bell, and if you weren't seated five minutes between the bells, and if there was an extra seat, anybody could take it, and his classroom would just be solid with students. Just packed in. But if you weren't in there by the second bell, you lost your seat. That was the rule. So everybody out of classes ran for history class to hear Murphy talk. He used to sing about Henry the VIII. Two widowed, two died, two survived and some other damn thing about his eight wives. He had all these things, and we all loved history. Mary, Queen of Scots, and what she did. Elizabeth put her out and said whack her head off and then her son was James the IV of Scotland and he came down and said, Auntie don't you think that was real severe to cut my mother's head off. She said, would it ease your pain at everything if you knew that you were going to be James the I, the King of England? He had all these tales and they were just indelible the way he put it out. He was one of the greatest instructors I have ever had. Now Eisenberg, I want to mention one other thing about him. With Eisenberg you

W: might get by with being late for class. You might get by with being out of class. He was understanding. But there was no excuse for you not to be in chapel. It was one class for 45 minutes. From 8:00 to 8:45 and you had better be in chapel. The faculty all came and they checked the roll of all the students and faculty and if you weren't at chapel, you were in trouble. He also wanted you at breakfast. I recall one morning, I wasn't in the dining room at that time, for some reason I slept in and I didn't go to breakfast. They took roll at breakfast. So the nurse came around to see you. So the first thing she did when she made the rounds then, she stuck a thermometer in your mouth. I knew she'd be around so I got some hot water and I kept it in a glass and I stuck the thermometer in. I didn't know how hot the water was/ Maybe 105 or 106. Oooh! She ran out of the room and was going to send me to the infirmary. I said, oh, I don't think that thing's right. I shook it down and I let it sit in the water and she said, oh, the thermometer never did that before. But you were in trouble if you didn't even go to breakfast. So these were some of his peculiarities and as I said he sat up on that little pedestal and watched everything that was on the ground. Then in the dining room, we had coal mine kids, farm kids, and so on. most of them didn't know whether to eat with a knife or pick the food up in their hands and so on. They probably had never been in where there was electricity or any inside plumbing or anything

*These were
to \$15
an 930
an 8000 class*

W: such as that. So we needed somebody to teach them etiquette. So we had Emily Post Day in the classes. So somebody would sit up there and show how you would serve them, and how you must take your soup and you take your soup like this with your hand down here and you dipped your soup away from you and you sipped it out the side. Then your salad. Then your meat. If it's meat, you cut one bite. Might cut two if it was on the corner. Then cut it off and pick it up. Or if you were ambidextrous, you could eat with this left fork and then your coffee and so on. So we had all that. Then they'd have inspection on Emily Post manners. He said, rightly so, you're going out to be a leader into a community. How can you teach any manners to those children if you don't know them. Eisenberg lived a lifetime ahead of his time in his thinking. I think he was one of the greatest educators of all times because he educated you right down to the roots. One day he said, Russ, why did you come here to Slippery Rock? I said, the biggest reason is my mother said I was coming and you never opposed anything she said. He said, well, what do you like? What do you do. I noticed that you took all the agriculture you could take. We called it botany and zoology then. I took the botany, all of it. But when we were here in school, they taught you how to plant rotation crops. We didn't have pesticides or anything. Taught you how to graft a tree. Taught you how to bud a tree. Taught you how to farm so your soil wouldn't wash away. In your

W: trigonometry, taught you how to do a survey. How you could do it. Take levels on things. If you were putting in ditches or running with stones, there are so many stones in Pennsylvania there. We would dig a big ditch and put a stone pile in it, put the sides and the sand rock and laid them on the top, then fill it in and have to cut through and you surveyed. So in your class here in agriculture, you learned spraying, surveying, grafting, budding, rotation of crops, taking care of the land and all of those things. I thought I'd go back and be a farmer. That's what I planned. Our milk check when I came to Slippery Rock in 1919 was running about \$50. When I got back in four years with the same cows, same everything, was running about \$30. I decided that probably wasn't it. It looked like a dying business, if it had gone down to that. We'd buy some more farms and gradually do that. Well, I taught school two years, country school. Couldn't get a school. When I left Slippery Rock, I was 18. I was unemployed. No job. I couldn't apply for a school till I was 19 to teach in the state of Pennsylvania. I walked across that stage and flipped that thing. And I looked for a job. They had to pay me a hundred dollars a month if they were going to hire me because I was a graduate of a teacher's college. They could pay a high school graduate \$85 a month. So they put in all high school graduates. So one of the schools had all these big boys as soon as farming was done and they came back to school. So they carried the

W: teacher out one day and she quit. So the only reason I got a job teaching school was because she quit. They couldn't get anybody to teach it so the path of least resistance they hired me. So I taught in the country school a couple of years. In the meantime, I thought what Thompson said to me in playing ball. Now I'm going to talk about sports. I played football, baseball, and ran on the track. And as you got older you helped on the track with the younger ones. We had one coach for everything. So the senior boys or boys that were good on that would help in track, or somebody else helped in basketball, or somebody helped in football and so on. As you moved along with him, and helped him in these phases, and I recall at the gym we had a place we could throw down here, and I played quite a bit of ball before I came here, played with the mining teams. So I pitched in the winter time. I could throw pretty hard, and I thought I bet I get in this spring to be a short reliever. Maybe a mini. Then as I went on I threw better, and I thought I bet I get to be a long reliever. Come spring I was hooking the ball pretty good, and I said, I'll bet I'll be a starter. Well up from Parker's Landing down on the Ohio River and West Virginia, they all come out of those hills, and I think we had something like 12 pitchers, and they were guys that either were in school or wanted to get a couple of credits in the spring term, school was out to do that, and when I looked at them I went up and I saw guys throwing the ball

W: better than I'd ever seen it thrown, so I immediately changed to shortstop. So I played there. If I had a good day, and if you knocked a nice fast ball to me, and I should make a double play, but for some reason I must have had a mental block because that ball was there and I reached down for it, but I looked up to how fast that guy was running to first base and I reached behind the ball, and the ball went through the field and everybody was safe. If it was a bad day and I didn't have time to look to see where that guy was going, I could probably make the play, so I did and I made a couple of real good plays that day, double plays. I got three hits. The Pittsburgh Pirates scouted me and wanted to know if I was interested in playing ball with the Pittsburgh Pirates. So I said to Coach, what do I do? He said, Russ, are you the best ball player at Slippery Rock? I said, no. He said, how many are better? I said, three. He said, yes, I'd say that's fair. What do you think will happen when you go to Class A ball? How many will be better? I said, oh, probably three. He said, I think that's true, and it won't change much. You'll bite your fingernails. You're not a natural ball player. You have been our chief custodian of the band-aid bag and did things and putting on mercurochrome for everybody here, wrapping them up, why don't you study medicine? I said, Coach, I haven't any money. He said, did you have any money when you came here? I said, no. He said, you can get through school just as well. This man interested me

W: in studying medicine. Gave me the opportunity to help originally here. Then carry the first aid bag. Take care of anybody, and gave me the inspiration and the confidence in me that I never would be a great ball player but he thought I could be a fine physician. And I have felt indebted to him and his wife who was as lovely as any person could ever be. Whenever we got hungry, we were across Kiester Avenue over at their house and had our hand in her cookie jar. She always enjoyed it, and it was always full. She died this last year. Dad knew her well. My folks lived here, and I always went up to see her, and she just was a charming person. The picture that hung next to her bed up there of the Coach, some student had done it in charcoal. It hung there. I said, we'd like to have that. We want to do something about Coach Thompson. Then we took a drawing off it.

C: We took a picture of it.

W: We took a picture of it. This book that comes out here is going to have his picture, Coach Thompson, and this book is dedicated to Coach Thompson, and his picture will be on the front page of this new book.

C: Dr. Wright has a real busy day and he has three or four other places he has to be and he has a wedding today, so is there anything specific that you would like to have him continue with?

W: I want to go to the Fitness Center, and the wedding is in Mercer, and then we go to the reception. I go home in the morning. Are there any questions?

- R: I would like to know how the Russell Wright Fitness Center came about if we could get that?
- W: He [Clinger] could tell you more about that. He's the cause of it. He caused that.
- R: Well, we kind of got part of his version, and we're going to tape him again, but if there's anything you would like to say about the prime movers.
- W: I would say that Doug had everything to do with it. He came to me, and he said, you know, we need a type of facility like this. Somebody would have to sponsor it. I said, Doug, I'd be glad to. So that's the way it started. We got a few dollars together and put them under Doug's direction. He started the fitness center.
- C: I did share with them all the history of all the correspondence between you and me, and the correspondence between the dean and me, and each of the phases that we went through was all part of the history that I did give to these folks and they will put it in the Archives.
- W: It was his idea to do this type of thing. I was concerned of this area. I love this area. I think there's no place in the world nicer to live than right here. I played ball with the old coal mines. A lot of those people, we didn't know what it was. Today we call it black lung, but when I would butcher pigs at the farm, their lungs were always pink, and when I posted (did a post mortem) a man, his lungs were black. So that's where we get the

W: word black lung. Carbon does not absorb, and it gets in your lungs. So these fellows start first with some asthma, or hay fever. They start sneezing. Then they get a little short of breath. They're losing their lung capacity. Then as they go on down, they don't *have enough lung capacity* get enough lung, so they start not exercising and sitting down and in here where they should be opening this thing up, instead of opening up their lungs, it's a good place for bacteria to grow, and they're losing more capacity. So I felt that this is some way, now these people developed a cardiac problem. Now we start doing bypasses. So we do bypasses on them, and they go back and sit on their chair for another year to two years, and then they say you need it again, and we've spent all this money, tremendous sums of money here. Now we're going to do it again. This man is not protected. Now he's going to die either from that or the surgery, and we've spent anywhere from a quarter to a half a million dollars on him of money that's produced nothing for America. I always wanted to be solvent. I don't mind spending a dollar, but I want to see that it's going to do some good. This was just throwing money away knowing that we could probably start in when he's with asthma and do a great deal better job through physical fitness than any surgery would do. And they were just going to go on downhill from that, plus all this expense. This was my interest in this. Now we started in and the interest in getting these students all worked into this

W: thing. Doug has had such a wonderful experience in education, in coaching, in watching people succeed that it's just unbelievable what can be done, and nobody knows it better than he, and that's why I was so glad to be a part of it when he suggested it. I was very much in favor of doing the thing. I wanted to show you one thing here. Here's an exercise we call thumbs up exercise. Come over here. This is she [Gay Vela] in the book [see appendix A]. Thumbs up your spine as far as you can reach. All right. Now drag them down and you turn your hands down and over. Now take a big deep breath. Your head back. Now walk on your toes. Try to make them walk 30 steps or 30 seconds to hold that. What are we doing? We're putting that air, all in their clavicles, in the first and second ribs. There's the exercise right there. Thumbs up. Where did I learn that? I was about six years old or seven when I had my business of selling apples. Old Granny McCurdy. That's her farm where our hunting camp is. We bought that back there. She was in her eighties and she was out fixing fence. One day she fell and broke her arm. She had her daughter cut out a piece of wood, a splint. Split it out. The bone stuck out. She pushed it back in and had her daughter pull it, pushed the skin back, took some silk thread and sewed it back up and put her hand in there, and it made an uneventful recovery. Now in this area, there was a lot of tuberculosis around Jackson Township

W: when I was a kid. I tested positive for tuberculosis. What she did, she said, this is the exercise. Your thumbs are way up your back. Now you drag them down over there and turn that way, head up straight. Big deep breath in, and then walk. That's what she did to us, and we didn't have a kid die of tuberculosis in the worst tuberculosis area there was. That was one of my first times when I was about six or seven years old in medicine and the next time was helping the doctor, being his assistant. The next time was Coach Thompson, and I thought this about the time and I practiced about 50 years, and I practically enjoyed every day of it. I've got a son that is a physician, and he doesn't care a thing about practice. I've got a grandson that is third year in orthopedic surgery, and then I have another one that is in research. Found a cell in the brain that they believe has to do with Alzheimers. He's on degree research at the University of Southern California, and she's [Gay Vela] working on her doctorate degree at the University of Nebraska, and then I have another one that's a freshman starting at the University of Kentucky in medicine this year. The other one is cutting chickens. I had one that graduated at the University of Denver in hotel management. Then she went up to Johnson and Wales. She wrote me a letter that said I'm cutting up chickens and guts. I said, after four years at Denver University, don't you think you have the cart before the horse? She said, no. I think I'm going

Resident
Fellow in teaching & research

- W: the right way. You know, she has. They all are interested, most of them, in some phase of medicine. My son's interested in making money, and he made a lot once and lost it all, so he thinks he's going to do it again.
- R: Do you see a turnaround out there in terms of a commitment to physical fitness by institutions that are rearing children or educational institutions?
- W: I don't think it's gotten down to the children's level yet. No. I don't. Now I'm not a good authority on this, but I think we're reaching it. Doug could probably answer that. I think we're reaching it in our college group today. Don't you think, Doug?
- C: More in the adult population probably than in the younger groups. There's been a trend away from it, and hopefully with the emphasis that the parents are putting on today, it should get back into the elementary school where it ought to be in the first place. Society doesn't value health very much at this time. None of us do. We're all immortal until we don't have our health.
- B: I think just one example that the fitness center has made a tremendous difference and a great benefit to the faculty at Slippery Rock.
- W: Is that right?

B: Oh, we've really benefited tremendously. I'm an example of that.

R: Right after it opened we had about ten bypass surgeries.

B: The rest of us have avoided that. It's made a difference in behavior.

C: The administration feels strongly about the relationships that are created there between faculty and staff, faculty and students, staff and students. In fact, our past vice-president, Hulbert, felt that the experiences that we had with the initial phases of our wellness program were some of the best things that ever happened on campus during his tenure at that time. I think that Dr. Aebersold recognizes the value of that, and the value of these relationships that have been developed as a result of the Russell Wright Fitness Center.

W: I didn't tell you. He called me last Thursday or Friday. He said he heard I was going to be down, and he wouldn't be here. He won't be back till Monday. He was going to Maine. He said he was sorry he wasn't going to be here. I told him I was going back Sunday so I would miss him.

Doug's had such an experience, so wide an experience, coaching, physical education, selection of students. I think this is the greatest thing that's ever been written to my experience. What every coach really needs to know to pick out the right guy for the

- W: right job, and to make him the best for that job. And he's the one that's put the basis to this thing.
- C: Gay had an opportunity to take it to Tom Osborne, the football coach at the University of Nebraska, and you could share that with us.
- V: I got a call just within about a week, and he said, Gay, I want to tell you that's one of the finest books that I've ever read. He said, it's right up to the latest research. It is outstanding and I'd like to write an endorsement for that book. He was very enthused about the book.
- R: And one of the most respected men in the country in that profession.
- C: What we tried to do was not focus it just on football. It's for a coach of any sport. It approaches it in a global approach to the whole coaching field rather than to be sport specific. There is so much you can do with sport specific things that if a coach is interested in basketball, he can go to a whole day clinic, but you can't get to all the coaches that way so we went this route.
- W: This chap here I saw him on television. He's coaching the Russian team now. One of the coaches, Alexeev. Did you see him? The heavyweight weight lifter.
- C: Yes. I saw him in the Olympics.
- W: Yes. Another interesting thing. The Russian doctor and I worked together for 25 years, and so we wanted to have a master's thing.

W: Bring the best weightlifters, gold medal winners all through Europe and then with ours at Las Vegas and put on a thing. ^{exhibition} So Alexeev was to come. So I was surprised at the Russians. I didn't want to go to Las Vegas. I didn't have the time to do this. They said, well, Alexeev isn't coming and at least Dr. Wright will be there, so we know who is going to be taking care of what. I wondered why they were so interested and wanted to treat me like a king out in Las Vegas. I found out that the Russians wouldn't let Alexeev come out side of the Crimean. His picture is in here somewhere. This is something I had in mind, and I sat down and in two months I wrote the damn thing, and people I visited worldwide. Here's a thing one night I might tell you. I conceived this idea of treating a man's back over in Moscow one night. The Russians are magicians at making you wait until you get cold. Outside the temperature is maybe fifty degrees and you warm up a guy and you're going to put him on the stage and then they shove in another weightlifter or they jump the weight and so on. They're great manipulators. The best coaching I ever saw is done by the Russians. Anyhow, the British had a weightlifter, and it looked like he could win, but they made him sit and wait till he got cold, and hold things up. So he went to get up. He had been sitting on a bench and he can't straighten up. They said he had three minutes to get on the stage and here's the gold medal. And he can't get it straightened up. So the British all start

W: yelling to me, where was I. So I was there, and I went down.

I couldn't figure out, no table, I just put him up on my back like I have him there, and I threw my hip into his. He straightened up. He ran up on the stage just as the whistle blew the three minutes, picked up the weights, and lifted and won the gold medal. The English hadn't won a medal for so damn long that they didn't have their anthem, God Save The Queen. The guy said what'll I do? I said play the Stars and Stripes. I'd like to hear that. The English jumped up and said, who did that? I did. It was better to hear that than the Russian anthem. I never got over that. They'd never forgive me that. When the only medal they ever won, and they played the Star Spangled Banner. That's how I came to conceive that treatment, and I've treated a lot of people like that and now they're using this method of treating backs pretty much all over the country.

R: Thank you so much.

W: If you get down south, we're right on the ocean. We'd love to have you. I'd love to have you as my guest, go to dinner. If you get down there, stop and see us. I remember the long walk on campus. They've cut it out now and have a highway there. That was two walks down there, but the boys on the south side never were allowed to walk on the girls' side of the long walk. His picture's up there. Dale Houk. We went to school together. His father was a preacher. Dale was in the first kindergarten in

W: Slippery Rock. Started here. Then he came back and he was here and going to school. He used to go with Elsie Haines. Elsie and him played tennis together on those courts down there. This morning the courts were full and they took a walk down in the woods. He came back and the president called them in and he said, Dale, you weren't playing tennis. Dale said, there weren't any courts. He said, yes, but were you courting down in the woods? Dale said, well, we were down there. He said, Dale, I know you won't lie, but you've done so many things that I don't know about that I don't feel that I'm embarrassed at all to throw you out of school. And he did. So then Dale goes out to Emma Guffey Miller's. Her brother had a farm down in Butler. So he ordered high fencing. Thousands of dollars for the fencing. So the inspector came up to see what the hell they did with all the fencing at Slippery Rock, but they found it down on Emma Guffey Miller's brother's farm down there. In the meantime, Emma Guffey Miller got in. The Democrats got in. So she came up to Dale, and, of course, he built the house, her brother built the house, the president's house, but they found out this thing about the wire so they fired him. So he never got to live in it. So Dale moved in the house. He was the first guy to get in it. So about the first thing Dale called was he said, the rebels are back in, come on down. So I think I was the first guest to be in the president's house.

W: You went to Brown University that weekend they had a hurricane and water was coming down over Slippery Rock. We got to have a bonfire. I thought the chapel was was going to wash away. Anyhow, Dale then left and went through and got his Ph.D. at Pittsburgh and was teaching as assistant superintendent at Allegheny College and then they took him out, put the Republicans in and so they hired Dale that day as president. So when she (Emma Guffey Miller) got back in the first thing she did, she got elected like tonight, she was up here in the morning and said, Dale, you're fired. He said, you can't fire me till you have another president. I'll have another one here at ten o'clock. Then he ran an educational system in Korea on an airplane. Teaching them English back and forth. Dale always stopped in Detroit to see me and his son came up there and went to Wayne University. There are so many rich memories of all the people here.