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3-4-2015

Interview with Gayle and Joe Lanford

Gayle Lanford

Joe Lanford

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**LOUISE PETTUS ARCHIVES AND SPECIAL COLLECTIONS
ORAL HISTORY PROJECT**

**Interview #254
LANFORD, Gayle
LANFORD, Joe**

LANFORD, Gale

LANFORD, Joe

Undergraduate and Graduate alum

Retired City Manager of Rock Hill

At Winthrop: Date range

Interviewed: March 4, 2015

Interviewer: Rebecca Masters and John Gaston

Index by: Michelle Dubert-Bellrichard and Rebecca Masters

Length: 01:18:25

Abstract: In their March 4, 2015 interview with Rebecca Masters and John Gaston, Gale and Joe Lanford detail their work with Anthony DiGiorgio and involvement with Winthrop. In particular, Gayle recalls her time as an undergraduate student from 1958-1962 navigating the rules and regulations of Winthrop. Joe shares his work bridging the gap between Winthrop and the City of Rock Hill and describes his role in design of Hardin Family Gardens at Winthrop. This interview was conducted for inclusion into the Louise Pettus Archives and Special Collections Oral History Program.

Keywords: Alumni, rules and regulations, dining hall, City of Rock Hill, Knowledge Park, Hardin Family Gardens, Golden Ratio, Rep. Herb Kirsh, Mayor Betty Jo Rhea, Mayor Doug Echols, City Councilman Melford Wilson, Presidents , Martha Piper, Jamie Comstock, First Lady Gale DiGiorgio.

Interview Session (March 4, 2015): Digital File

Time Keywords

00:00:00 *Start of Interview*/Interviewer's Introduction

00:00:30 *Question:* Gayle, when were you at Winthrop and what did you study? *Answer:* Came to Winthrop in 1958. Graduated in three years in 1962. Studied English and minored in French. Started teaching in Virginia. Moved back to Rock Hill in 1966. Taught in Rock Hill. Completed Master's Degree from 1970-72 in Guidance and Counseling.

00:01:26 *Question:* Gayle, why Winthrop? *Answer:* Only place GL could afford. Parents not college graduates. GL had siblings.

- 00:02:05 *Question:* Entrance exam? *Answer:* GL took a state exam not at SAT. GL talks about the challenges of the exam. Went to Wofford to take the exam.
- 00:03:00 *Question:* How did you arrive on campus? *Answer:* GL's parents brought her. Students couldn't go home every weekend. GL recalls riding the bus home to Spartanburg.
- 00:03:45 *Question:* Assigned a roommate? *Answer:* GL roomed with a girl from her high school class her first year. Then roomed with a girl from Hickory Grove for the remaining two years. Lived in McLaurin for two years, then lived in Phelps as a senior.
- 00:04:20 *Question:* Homesick? *Answer:* Sort of. GL talks about psychology lab experiment about homesickness. GL says her father cried every morning the first week when GL went away to college.
- 00:05:20 *Question:* Lights out? *Answer:* 10:30. GL remembers studying for a test with a flashlight. The hall monitor caught GL and gave her warning. Room check happened sporadically. Hall monitors washed students' clothes. GL talks about dating Joe and staying out late one night. Students received restrictions: per minute a student was late, they received that many days of restrictions. GL describes her house mother in McLaurin and a time Joe called on GL at Winthrop.
- 00:08:25 *Question:* Blue Line? *Answer:* The Blue Line happened once a year at the beginning of the year. Students were not required to attend church.
- 00:08:58 *Question:* Rules and regulations? *Answer:* Students couldn't drink within a 25 mile-radius of Winthrop. Students could be "shipped" or sent home for drinking or stealing. GL never had problems with those rules. Students couldn't wear pants.
- 00:10:20 *Question:* Did girls smoke back then? *Answer:* Yes. Companies used to put packs of cigarettes on plates in dining room.
- 00:11:00 *Question:* Uniforms? *Answer:* GL didn't have to partake in that.
- 00:11:20 *Question:* Gym uniforms? *Answer:* Swimming suit. GL thankful for learning how to swim.
- 00:12:18 *Question:* Food? *Answer:* Sat family style. Food was delicious. Two seniors were mentors at table, then the rest of the table was random. The chimes would play, students would say a blessing, then they would eat. People were on scholarship to serve in the dining hall. GL talks about etiquette in the dining hall. GL wishes she had the recipe for the banana bread. When the meal was good, students would applaud.

- 00:14:08 *Question:* Concerts/plays? *Answer:* Students required to attend cultural events. Students assigned seats in the auditorium – hall monitors would check to make sure students were in attendance. Students saw operas and ballets. GL talks about community events.
- 00:16:00 *Question:* Clubs? *Answer:* Psychology club. Active in DSU and would go to the Wesley Foundation. GL was mostly busy with coursework.
- 00:16:45 *Question:* Favorite/least favorite classes and professors? *Answer:* Alice Love was “outstanding” – taught English. Professor Dulls in English was also “outstanding.” Dr. Scott – psychology – would have students over to his house.
- 00:17:45 *Question:* Did you feel like you had professional mentors in faculty? *Answer:* Not really. GL was assigned a faculty advisor – they just made sure the students took classes they needed to graduate. GL mentions registration – seniors got first pick, then the other students had to pull a number.
- 00:18:50 *Question:* Athletics? *Answer:* No.
- 00:19:10 *Question:* What else would you do? *Answer:* Go out to eat – Park and Grille. GL didn’t have enough money to go to Charlotte. Students would walk out to the farm. GL here when Dr. Sims resigned – Dr. Sims gave students a half day. Boyfriends would come in on the weekends.
- 00:21:05 *Question:* President? *Answer:* Dr. Sims, then Dr. Davis.
- 00:21:33 *Question:* What did it mean to be a Winthrop student? *Answer:* Winthrop had a reputation for producing reputable teachers. GL recalls her own experience finding a job as a teacher. GL felt like her education competed with any other student. GL talks about how cohesive Winthrop was. Alma mater.
- 00:24:15 *Question:* How has Winthrop’s image changed? *Answer:* It has changed with the times. GL is proud of Winthrop.
- 00:24:45 *Question:* First impression of DiGiorgio? *Answer:* “He seemed very statesmen like.” GL and JL worked with DiGiorgio more and got to know him better. GL says many alums are impressed with DiGiorgio’s work.
- 00:25:40 *Question:* Comstock? *Answer:* Never met her.
- 00:25:50 *Question:* Other thoughts? *Answer:* GL recalls being in the garden and having sing-a-longs with fellow students. During alumni reunions, students have a memorial service

- in the Little Chapel.
- 00:28:08 *Question:* Joe, role and relation to Winthrop and when? *Answer:* City planner, city planning director, and then city manager during most of DiGiorgio's tenure.
- 00:28:53 *Question:* What were Winthrop's greatest strengths and weaknesses? *Answer:* Strength: the beauty of the campus. Weakness: isolated from City. JL felt like leaders at Winthrop didn't reach out to the community very well.
- 00:29:54 *Question:* How would you compare current Winthrop to Winthrop circa 1989? *Answer:* JL says it's completely different. Says its integrated with the community. JL credits DiGiorgio.
- 00:30:25 *Question:* What did you and DiGiorgio do to bridge the gap between Winthrop and Rock Hill? *Answer:* JL's degree in urban design – says he and DiGiorgio were kindred spirits in design. “Empowering the Vision” – an initiative to get all the community organizations to work together to create a better community. JL recalls the pleasure of working with DiGiorgio.
- 00:32:25 *Question:* First impressions? *Answer:* JL says he and DiGiorgio hit it off right away. JL mentions working with a former Winthrop President. JL speculates that Dr. Piper wanted to do more than she was able to because of her health. JL talks about the high turnover in the President's position before DiGiorgio.
- 00:34:45 *Question:* Challenges? *Answer:* Getting integrated into the community and having a greater vision for Winthrop were two challenges. JL speculates there was some complacency at Winthrop.
- 00:35:50 *Question:* What year did you move back? *Answer:* 1966.
- 00:35:58 [no question] JL speaks about the figurative “fence around” campus.
- 00:36:15 *Question:* Closed gates? *Answer:* Can't recall.
- 00:37:08 *Question:* How would you rate DiGiorgio's work? *Answer:* JL says DiGiorgio is Winthrop's greatest President. He had a long enough tenure to create relationships and accomplish his vision.
- 00:38:45 *Question:* Did Winthrop's beginnings as an all-girls school help or hurt its current reputation? *Answer:* JL says that is its history. Whatever limitations that existed were overcome. JL says that Winthrop did not grow as fast as it could – speculates that it may hurt alumni contributions.

- 00:39:45 *Question:* How did Rock Hill develop as a college town? *Answer:* Winthrop's historic beginnings did limit Rock Hill's growth, says JL.
- 00:41:05 *Question:* How did politics affect Winthrop? *Answer:* Politics impact everything. JL recalls a former mayor who wasn't focused on Winthrop's best interest. JL talks about legislative members who did not see Winthrop's value.
- 00:42:35 *Question:* Supporters of Winthrop? *Answer:* JL says Betty Jo Rhea was a "cheerleader for Rock Hill and Winthrop." State Rep. Herb Kirsh was a "curmudgeon." Kirsh eventually came around. Emmett Jerome – nice person but myopic.
- 00:44:50 *Question:* How did your support for Winthrop impact the university? *Answer:* JL says the good relationship he had with DiGiorgio made for a good working relationship – shared visions. Sports tourism – Cherry Park first example, tennis and soccer complexes, etc. Winthrop owned the land Cherry Park is on. Winthrop and city of Rock Hill swapped land. Accomplishments seen when people work together.
- 00:48:10 *Question:* Winthrop's art programs reputation? *Answer:* Winthrop was the cultural core of Rock Hill. Winthrop helped people see the importance of culture. Art had little value at one time in Rock Hill. Now, people support public art.
- 00:50:30 *Question:* Asked to provide advice behind the scenes? *Answer:* JL and DiGiorgio used to console each other. JL says his friendship with DiGiorgio was collaborative.
- 00:51:10 *Question:* Hardin Family Gardens origins? *Answer:* JL approached DiGiorgio about Hardin Park and his ideas for a new plan. JL discusses the concept of Hardin Gardens – balance and harmony. The golden ratio. Intended to be a contemplative place.
- 00:55:35 [no question] Scholar's walk.
- 00:55:55 *Question:* Football? *Answer:* JL a sports fan, but JL never felt football was right for Winthrop.
- 00:57:05 *Question:* What would Rock Hill be without Winthrop? *Answer:* JL says it wouldn't have the character it does now. JL mentions the importance of the faculty and staff and how they affect the character of Rock Hill. JL says Rock Hill wouldn't have notoriety without Winthrop – known throughout the state. "Winthrop is what made Rock Hill distinctive." Transformational moments in Rock Hill's history: the decision to locate Winthrop in Rock Hill.
- 00:59:33 *Question:* Knowledge Park? *Answer:* Progress depends on people working together – Rock Hill doesn't have the financial backing of other cities. Knowledge Park concept "is a great one." Tax increment financing is contentious. JL says it's hard to get

- people to see the big picture. JL suspects Knowledge Park will prevail.
- 01:02:40 *Question:* Comstock? *Answer:* JL met Dr. Comstock once. JL mentions something condescending Dr. Comstock said.
- 01:03:55 *Question:* Did Dr. Comstock make contributions to Rock Hill or Knowledge Park? *Answer:* No. Not here long enough to do that. JL says the fact that Comstock's firing hurt Rock Hill's development. JL views that "as a tragedy of sorts."
- 01:04:45 *Question:* Did you attend any sessions with new Presidential candidates? *Answer:* No.
- 01:05:05 *Question:* What do you think Rock Hill expects from the next President? *Answer:* JL speaks for himself and hopes the next President can "keep his ego in check" and work with other community leaders. JL hopes the next President will have a vision. Winthrop is at a tipping point.
- 01:07:03 *Question:* Any other thoughts or comments? *Answer:* JL mentions his first impression of DiGiorgio – comments on Gale DiGiorgio.
- 01:08:10 *Question:* Gale DiGiorgio's contributions? *Answer:* Gale kept everything moving forward.
- 01:10:05 [no question] GL talks about Melford Wilson serving a role in public office. Melford Wilson, Doug Echols, and Cherry Park.
- 01:12:00 *Question:* Anything else? *Answer:* No.
- 01:12:50 [no question] GL says their children went to Winthrop. JL was an instructor at one point. JL and DiGiorgio would have an informal breakfast once a month – comments on DiGiorgio's informal networking as a key to his success. GL remembers her 50th reunion – DiGiorgio was in attendance.
- 01:15:20 [no question] GL talks about meeting a woman who went to Winthrop.
- 01:17:05 [no question] Interviewer talks about World Wide Winthrop Day.
- 01:18:25 ***End of interview***

Gale and Joe Lanford (#254)