

Dear Colleagues,

In the past two and a half years the members of the Emeriti Oral History Group have conducted and collected about 100 interviews of colleagues who have retired from the faculty in Bloomington. Copies of the tapes of the interviews are stored both in Emeriti House and the University Archives, and we have engaged a professional service to make typed transcriptions (about half the interviews are now preserved in typescript as well). We are ready now to begin the second passage of this interesting enterprise. I write to invite your participation, as the subject of an interview, as an interviewer, or both.

For a list of topics that might constitute a "typical" interview, see this announcement ("Topics of Interviews with Emeriti") on the Emeriti House website www.indiana.edu/~emeriti/. Of course, it has turned out that there is no such thing as a typical interview. The expansion of the American academy during the past half century, the character and velocity of change in different intellectual disciplines, and the range of opportunities offered by a big university like Indiana have given each of us a somewhat different story to tell about how we came to be university professors and what we did in the practice of our professions.

But certain themes have emerged: how we chose our disciplines (high school teachers turn out to be important); how we learned to teach (mostly by attentively doing it); how our disciplines have changed (advances and refinements in instrumentation have been greatly important in the sciences); how we formed or joined intellectual and political communities on and beyond the campus; what we think university administrators ought to be doing to preserve and increase the quality of the campus (often, something different from what they seem to be doing). The stories that gather around these themes, and their variations, will surely instruct students and historians of the University – the writers, for example, who will be commissioned to prepare the history of the University for its Bicentennial in 2020. It is therefore valuable, we think, to add to the rich matter we have already collected.

If you would like to be interviewed in the Emeriti Oral History project, please let me know (gray@indiana.edu), and I will arrange for an interview in Emeriti House or, if you wish, in some other place more convenient for you.

If you want to nominate one or more of your colleagues to be interviewed, send me their names and I will invite them to add their stories to our collection.

If you are interested in joining the Emeriti Oral History Group and conducting some of the interviews, we welcome your help and participation.

None of these invitations excludes the others – it seems to make sense, for example, for someone doing interviews to be first interviewed herself or himself.

We will be glad for your participation in the oral history project, in any way that interests you.

Donald Gray, for the Emeriti Oral History Group

TOPICS OF INTERVIEWS WITH EMERITI

CHILDHOOD AND FAMILY BACKGROUND: especially, but not exclusively, relevance to choice of profession and intellectual discipline

EDUCATION: influential members of family and friends, teachers, books, experiences

MOVING OUT: experiences outside the academy (e. g. military, non-academic jobs)

GRADUATE SCHOOL; entering the academy: when, where, and, especially, why

COMING TO BLOOMINGTON: colleagues and students; intellectual and professional life; social life; politics of department, school, campus, discipline, and profession; responses to and relations with town

TEACHING: early courses, learning how to teach; development of topics and tactics; character of students; changes in students, topics, and style of teaching; changes in curriculum; purposes of undergraduate teaching; graduate and post-doctoral teaching and mentoring, and dissertation direction; connection with research and writing; best and worst experiences; satisfactions, frustrations, and disappointments

RESEARCH, SCHOLARSHIP, AND WRITING: early work; learning how to be a [biologist, literary historian, economist, librarian, etc.]; development of interests and methods; connections with teaching; changes in discipline; collaboration with and influence of colleagues in and outside Bloomington;; visiting appointments and travel, and their utility for scientific and scholarly work; high points and frustrations

COLLEAGUES: who has been important for you in your growth as a teacher and in your research and writing? how did you discover and develop these relationships? how have you established and maintained intellectual and professional relationships with colleagues outside Bloomington?

RESOURCES: libraries, laboratories, classrooms, and offices; research grants and support; technologies of teaching and intellectual work (especially laboratories and computing); what the University made possible (and what it didn't)

ADMINISTRATION AND SERVICE TO PROFESSION AND DISCIPLINE: administrative positions; work with academic journals and presses; work in scholarly, scientific, and professional organizations; important and interesting committee work, on and off campus; relationship of this work to academic interests and identity

CHANGES IN THE UNIVERSITY: how has the University – and the academy in general – changed during your life in your profession? how have large social changes – the women’s movement, for example, affirmative action and the drive for diversity, the international interests and commitments of the United States – affected your work in the University and your idea of its character and purposes?

RETIREMENT: what do you do? what do, and don’t, you miss?

ROADS NOT TAKEN: given what you now know to be your talents and interests, can you imagine what you might have done had you not chosen to spend your life in the academy? can you imagine any other occupation that might have been as satisfying?

SATISFACTIONS AND FRUSTRATIONS: what accomplishments have given you the most satisfaction? what did you want or try to do that you did not complete as solidly as you had wished? what got in the way?

ADVICE: what advice would you give to a young colleague just starting out in your discipline and at Indiana University? what advice would you give to the administrators of the campus and the University?

CONCLUDING REMARKS: would you do it again? would you do here, at Indiana? is there anything that we have not talked about that you would like to talk about?