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# Gary Barlow interview, Professor Emeritus, Department of Teacher Education, Wright State University

Lewis Shupe  
*Wright State University - Main Campus*

Gary Barlow  
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**WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY**  
**Retiree Association Oral History Project**

Interview date: August 29, 2006

Interviewer: Lewis Shupe  
Emeritus, Dept. of Communication

Interviewee: Gary Barlow  
Emeritus, Teacher Education

**LS:** Today's date is August 29, 2006, and I am Dr. Lewis Shupe, professor emeritus from the Department of Communication, and I will be interviewing Dr. Gary Barlow, university professor emeritus and past chairperson of Art Education. Gary, thank you for participating with the oral history project for the Retirees Association, and tell us, or share with us, about your background and how you first came to Wright State.

**GB:** Well, I graduated from Miami University and Penn State, and I was teaching school in Cincinnati Public Schools, an art teacher, and I got a call from a person in Oxford at Miami University, offering me a position over here, the Miami University Extension Program, in Dayton and Piqua at that time. The person who taught extension for this new job would be traveling from Dayton to Piqua, Ohio, teaching evening courses up there and evening courses here. So I came over and did that, and started in the extension program. Now this was before Wright State, of course, ever opened-

**LS:** When was that?

**GB:** Um, 1960. –and, but there were rumors in the air that something was going to happen in higher education in this area and so on, and to look forward and so on. So it was very exciting being over here at that time. A lot of traveling and so on. They mounted a campaign to look into the feasibility of expanding or building an extension program, which would be the Miami University and Ohio State University Extension Program. They raised a lot of capital funds, a lot of funds in the Dayton area, a lot of support for that, and in this whole process, since I was over here and was the first residential faculty member from Miami, they brought me out to show me where, the land out here, where a higher ed. facility might be built. And I came out and it was grassland and fences and cows in the fields and so on, and I looked over and I thought, “Oh my, did I give up a job to come over here for this? Something isn't even up yet”. Later, I came out and watched the big hole in the ground being dug for the first building. But, at any rate, that's how it began and that's how I became involved as, as the Miami University Extension faculty member in this area.

**LS:** Yes, you mentioned that you were one of two persons.

**GB:** Yes, there was another person, Dr. Lowe, Mark Lowe, who was the first faculty member from Ohio State. So Mark and I were really the first two faculty members hired here, for this, which became Wright State.

**LS:** Now, can you walk us through up through from 1960 to the 1964 period?

**GB:** Probably not. (Laughing) I can't remember all of this. It seems now kind of hazy to me, but I know that we first were in a public school in Dayton, in the Dayton Area, and we interviewed potential faculty for teaching in the extension program, and we interviewed students, and one night I was, worked in the bursars office, because I had some extra time, another night I remember I advised Veterans in higher education, we did everything over here in terms of starting all of this, both some faculty from Ohio State and faculty from Miami. And that's how we kind of got involved, kind of this mixture of people, mixture of faculty getting started. Of course when they moved, further ahead now, when they had our building here, the first building, we all were in the same building, and we had the same kind of camaraderie there. I remember our faculty, my office was on the 4<sup>th</sup> floor, I was down the hall from Languages, around the corner was Psychology, Music, Art, I mean we were all in here together, everybody was together and that was one of the very interesting and I think good things about the beginnings of all of this-

**LS:** Now you are talking about Allyn Hall.

**GB:** I'm talking about Allyn Hall, yes. Yes, we, our faculty offices were in the top floor, we taught classes in the basement I think, but anyway the 1<sup>st</sup> floor and 2<sup>nd</sup> floor.

**LS:** Now you've mentioned only faculty, how did you relate to staff?

**GB:** Well, we were all in here together. We were all in the building together, and everybody knew everybody else. (Pause) I remember the first class I ever had at Wright State. My room wasn't finished, and they were still putting up the ceiling, and that day I had a class at, we'll say 9 o'clock, I don't remember, we'll say 9 o'clock in the morning. And there were ladders in the end, and the workers were up there putting ceiling up, ceiling tiles or whatever. And my class came in and so I made a deal with the workers that they could work awhile and we'd wait, and then they had to wait awhile while I taught, and this was my first class. So I would be teaching and we'd stop and wait for them, and they'd click in all of these things, and I'd signal and they'd stop, and I'd be lecturing and asking some questions and all of a sudden I saw movement behind me, I still remember this, this was how many years ago. I saw the movement and I turned around, I'd asked the class a question and the worker up on top of the ladder raised his hand. So I called on him and he answered, and he got involved in the lecture in the class. But that was a fun time, a good time, and I think an interesting way to start my whole career here, with both students and workers who were putting up the ceiling.

**LS:** Describe the student body, that very first year.

**GB:** It was a mix of younger and, as I recall, older people, 20's, 30's, 40's. I remember one of our students was in his 80's, or an older person. Well, the older I get, the younger he gets. Mostly everybody, almost everybody, was a commuter, and I can't remember, we probably drew mostly from Dayton and surrounding counties as I recall. But it was a nice, healthy mix.

**LS:** Were you encouraged, or were you discouraged in that first year?

**GB:** You know, as I think back I don't think we had time to be discouraged. It was so new, and so, if I can use the word positively, so wild and so kind of crazy. I mean, not many people have the opportunity, now I realize it was a phenomenal opportunity. Not many people have the opportunity of coming out to an open field where there are cows at first, and then something happens, and then a building goes up, and people come in, and you grow year by year by year to look at what Wright State is now. Not many people have the opportunity of being there while a university is built around them, do you know what I'm saying? It's really a wild and crazy and wonderful thing. Oh, we had problems, but the problems as I remember were solvable, but we didn't really know the answers to all of them, we just kind of solved them. And I think that's part of the creativity of being in an environment like (this), it was not an established environment; we had to build it as we went along and that was what was fun.

**LS:** Who do you remember as your first administrator, (pause), or president of the university? There wasn't a president of the university...

**GB:** I remember when Dr. Golding became president. The ones that I worked with primarily were Earl Theskin from Miami, and it was the Miami ties that led me and kind of directed and supervised me. Right at the beginning, as I recall, I didn't know many of the Ohio State administrators because they remained in Columbus pretty much, on campus, as a lot of the Miami administrators remained in Oxford. So we were kind of out here and that was our tie to our mother institution. But as we grew 2, 3, 4, 5 years then it became more mixed. But at the beginning it was just, I think that way, pretty much.

**LS:** Take us a little beyond Allyn Hall now, when we started to expand. And I'm leading you toward the tunnel system.

**GB:** Well, I remember, oh, the tunnel system was an accident. They built the tunnel system to carry all the electrical wires and all of that from the first building to the second, as I recall, and they found that some of the students were sneaking down there and running back and forth between the buildings during bad weather, and I think some of the faculty, in fact I think I may have done that, too, some of the faculty, too. So that, it really became, the tunnel system really came about kind of by accident that way. It was great when we had our second building going up, I remember one day we stopped all classes and we went out between the two buildings, between Millett and Allyn, when they put in the new trees. We went out and all watched them put in the new trees, and made some speeches and clapped and did things like that. I remember when we got our Quad and we

had the four buildings up, we had our first Commencement there, we had (the) Artist's Series out on the Quad. I remember, I think Stokely Carmichael was here, I know Gloria Steinem was here, I know Ravi Shankar was here, and others were here, so we had quite an interesting mix out here, and we had to have those, also, those events when people were here before they drove home, because we were primarily a commuter college.

**LS:** What was the character of the university at that time? You've already spoken about that to an extent, but if you had to describe that, in one word, at that moment, what would it be?

**GB:** Exciting. It would be "exciting". I remember talking with so many people, so many faculty members as we've reminisced over the years, that we always, mostly always, aside from the little day to day problems that we always have, even now, but it was exciting to come here and to be here because it was so new and refreshing and so on. You know, we had bad days or we had a tough class or we had a flat tire on the way, those are the everyday things, but the whole general tenor of the educational environment here I think was very exciting.

**LS:** Did they, I assume they did not have a cafeteria, what did you do for food?

**GS:** Well, at first we ate out of machines, and I remember it was pretty bad, and I remember one of the faculty members and administrators in Education, Dr. Milheim, Robert Milheim, said that he was getting so tired of the food that he would get a sandwich out of the machine and throw the sandwich away and eat the cellophane. And I always remembered that, I kind of agreed with him in a way. I don't remember when the first cafeteria or the first food service came into being, but it probably was in Allyn Hall in the first floor area. We probably were so glad to have hot food, not out of machines, that we all probably celebrated that day, too.

**LS:** Describe the role of the administration at that time.

**GB:** Well, as I remember the administration was also experimenting a lot. Of course we had our directives from Ohio State and Wright State, and-

**LS:** You mean Miami-

**GB:** I'm sorry, Ohio State and Miami, -but those were givens, you know, the curriculums and the administrative duties and so on were givens. But the management of those, the experimentation of trying new things out, of starting a new program, of building a new school, of talking about a medical school possibility, trying this and trying that. It was kind of electric and interesting that way. It was nothing for a dean to say, "Can we have five people from this floor to get together, we want to brainstorm something." So we would all run down to a table, sit around, and they'd toss something out that we'd never thought of before or (that) they were thinking about, and we'd brainstorm it. That, to me, is good.

**LS:** Now, the university was called what at that time?

**GB:** The (pause), The Ohio State and Miami University Extension Program in Dayton, Ohio. That's close enough.

**LS:** Okay, now lead us into when you were searching for a name for the university.

**GB:** I remember one of our first meetings was over in Allyn Hall, down in the center area where, indeed, that was the food service, and around in the chairs. Students and faculty and staff all came in one time and we had a big box, it was like a Valentine box from our elementary school, we'd drop in names, thoughts for names of a school, and we all sat around and discussed (them). We did this also for the school colors, by the way, the green and gold and different things. But anyway we were thinking of school names and we had some terrible ones. I remember this one, (pause), something that sounded like Smith Brothers cough drops, I can't exactly remember the name, the Wright Brothers something. I don't know, anyway we all thought of cough drops so we threw that one out, and south, Southern Ohio State University and a whole lot of names and that's how it came about. We all discussed it and thought of it and voted for it, and put some up for our top choices and threw others out.

**LS:** What about the colors, the school colors, do you remember?

**GB:** I don't remember much about that, we all went in with the idea of green and gold or blue and white, I remember blue and silver was one of them, a number of things. Of course scarlet and gray and red and white were out, because that was Miami and Ohio State, so we couldn't do that. But at any rate, then they said, "Well, what about Kelly green versus hunter green versus lawn green?", and we all looked, we couldn't remember all of those things, so anyway we worked through that and got the colors.

**LS:** Okay, now, take us to the logo, the first logo.

**GB:** President Golding was here then, and I don't remember if it was his first year or not, it was an early year when he was just here, one or two years, and we thought we ought to have a logo and a motto, and some things that would help in our identification. We had our feet on the ground, now we needed to kind of build our identity a little more. He called me in, and he said, "We need a logo. Can you do something?", and he had some information from some business people and some other people on some ideas for a logo. But he wanted me to sketch them out, so I went back and I sketched a few pages of logos, and the one I liked, he didn't like, so that was out. But, we did come up with another logo, which is not the logo now, it was more of a triangular, triangles and a circle, standing for teaching, scholarship and service, and it was in a circle and so on. So I did those, and we finally voted on those and selected that as our logo. I wish I still had all of those sketches, they'd be wonderful for the archives, maybe we'll find them someday.

**LS:** I think they may be able to find them in the archives at some point.

**GB:** That would be fun to see them again.

**LS:** Any other innovative things that you had to do in the early days?

**GB:** One of the best things for me, which I alluded to earlier, is, way back before our first building was here, was that we were forced, not forced negatively, but forced by circumstance, to get involved with everything that related to a higher education area. As I said, advising Veterans, because they needed it and I was there that night, and my class wouldn't start for another hour and they needed help, and I knew the curriculum up to that point. So I went in and helped to advise Veterans. Because there was a long line, so I helped, but not only me, we all did that, and I think that really helped all of us in the beginning in terms of really getting a feel for the total. Not just our own part, but for the total, and I think that really helped to build a solidarity for us all. And I must re-emphasize that faculty, and staff and students all worked that way... and administration of course.

**LS:** Tell us a little bit about how your own department was expanded and some of the innovative things that you did in those early years.

**GB:** Well, when I started, I was in Art Education and Teacher Training, and so I trained people in the Arts and then also trained teachers, and in the early years, I not only taught here but supervised our students both from Miami, mainly from Miami in the beginning years, out in the Dayton area. Then as we began to develop the program further here, of course our program expanded and our course work expanded, and we hired more faculty and so on, it was the College of Education then, later, the College of Education and Human Services. As we began to work more and we had a program here, and some students here were disabled, we began to work more in the Arts with the disabled, and that became a part of our program. There was a committee in Washington, headed by, among other people, Jean Kennedy Smith, whom we worked with in establishing our program even further here in Arts for the... then it was titled Arts for the Disabled and Handicapped, now the title has changed. So that expanded it and the whole thing, and we ultimately wrote and had accepted by the state the Master of Art Therapy Program here. We were a model site, I think we were the first university program in Arts for the disabled and handicapped person in the nation, here at Wright State, and that was quite a coup, because our university was so new. But other programs across the university also gained some notoriety in terms of special programming, and that made it fun because a new university, new programs, it all began to kind of work together.

**LS:** You mentioned Jean Kennedy Smith. Would you like to elaborate on when she visited the university?

**GB:** Gosh, I can't remember the date, but I know we had a big, very special Arts Festival here, maybe one of our first ones, and she flew here from Washington with some people, and was here a couple of days, and saw our program and-

**LS:** And you had lunch with her...

**GB:** -we had lunch with her, yes, (laughs). I know what you're leading to. We had a Center at that time, so we had lunch at the Center, and Food Services had a really nice luncheon, the President and the administration and different faculty and some of our students all hosted a lunch for Mrs. Smith plus the national committee members who were here. We had everything laid out, and that morning we had a call from Washington from Jean Kennedy Smith's personal secretary, and said Mrs. Smith, by the way, likes cheese soup. So we called Food Services and we very quickly got some, they made cheese soup for us. I remember that, having cheese soup at the last minute. It's probably not what you're leading me to, but I just thought of that. She was a very gracious and charming person, still is, but at that time she was very gracious and charming to us and very supportive of our program.

**LS:** What about when the Creative Arts Building was constructed?

**GB:** The programs in the Arts have developed phenomenally here at Wright State, that is Theatre, Music, Dance, Visual Arts, Teacher Training in the Arts, and we all got together and were making plans for the possibility of a new building. We were just outgrowing Allyn Hall, and our first theatre, which was up on Zink Road, I believe, and Music was in some of the high schools, we were just using every facility we could find for the Visual and Performing Arts in the beginning. So the chairs of the departments, the various departments, got together and we all started planning for the Creative Arts Center. That was one of the other exciting things, planning the building, working on the designs and moving the rooms around and doing that. So we were involved in that, and I remember the opening of the Creative Arts Center, and the evening we had the organ concert with the built-in organ in the Music Hall. It was all very nice, exhibits all over the place and so on, and that served as kind of the nucleus of bringing together the Arts at Wright State.

**LS:** You talked about the early relationships at Allyn Hall. Now you're getting separated into more of the individual departments. What was the difference?

**GB:** In the beginning, it was very free-wheeling, I mean really, very free-wheeling at the beginning. Boy, we were all in new shoes and trying new things and experimenting a lot. Within the framework of education, of course, it wasn't just chaos reigned, I don't mean that, but I mean that we could try things. Some things didn't work, some things were shot down, some things blossomed. But it was that kind of an aura, I think, that was here, and that I liked very much, and I tried to keep that in our program as we moved ahead and got older, so to speak. It's inevitable, I think, with maturity one settles in, and I think with maturity, we're forty years old now, we've settled in to an extent. Probably it's the natural phenomenon of all of this, that we lose some of that, and I mean this very positively, some of that wild creativity at the beginning, and that's positive. Because I think ideas grow and develop. We haven't lost at all by any means, this is a phenomenal university now, too. Maybe it's inevitable that you lose that, a little bit of that, as you grow older and mature. But I hope we never lose it totally.

**LS:** Identify about three people that you remember well from the very early days, because you probably know people or knew people whose names now appear on buildings.

**GB:** I really didn't know Allyn and Fawcett and so on, I did know Millett, John Millett. John Millett was President of Miami University, so obviously I would, when I was a student there, by the way. So obviously I knew him, and when he came up here on various occasions, and after he wasn't president, after he retired and so on and would come here, I knew him and met him, and he was a very great person, if I can use that word. He was just very supportive and very focused, and just a very good person to talk with. He took Miami great distances and he helped us, I think, the theory of building a higher university here... great distances and (he) was very supportive.

**LS:** What about Fred White?

**GB:** Fred White was a gentleman, and this was his child, this idea of building a university. He was here in every position, you would see him when we had races in the Moat, he was out there in a rowboat rowing, at one time. He would be down at Warner House, which was, (it's) not here now, it's down where some of the roads are going through now, that was one of our first administrative buildings. He was there, he was up here handling a shovel when we broke ground for new buildings, he was out helping plant trees, he was over asking me, one time, was my room okay, was the air conditioning working okay. I mean, he just wanted this to go so much, and was very supportive and very nice, (a) very pleasant, charming, supportive man.

**LS:** Now, if you had to describe Wright State now, in one word, what would it be?

**GB:** Amazing. Amazing, and I use that word from an historical perspective. Being here at the beginning, exciting, just too amazing, I come back and I can't believe Wright State. I can believe it, but I can't believe it in some ways. It's just, I don't think we envisioned this much. I think we envisioned something at the beginning, but we were so new, we didn't quite have a handle on that out there, totally. But we envisioned something would grow, but this is amazing. I mean, when I look at the Medical School, and the buildings and the pathways, the big, red sculpture, the Theatre and Music and Art, the grants and the research, the number of faculty and the programs, it's amazing to me.

**LS:** If you had the opportunity to go back and redo something, what would it be?

**GB:** I've thought about this so much. I would have documented more. I let things slip, and I've forgotten dates and I've forgotten exactly when and so on. It's like a genealogy, and I wish I would have written or documented a little bit more. Because it's kind of frustrating to grab hold of that, and I think it's very important to know where you've been in order to really know where you are. I wish I had done that a little more.

**LS:** Now, for additional thoughts, is there anything that I did not ask you that you would like to share?

**GB:** (Pause) I don't think so, I just... thanks for asking me those questions, it kind of spurred on some memories and some things that I hadn't remembered before. Not asking me, but I just want to repeat, I hope we haven't lost some of that which was so exciting. It's hard being a first faculty member to adequately tell what the aura and the feeling was at that time, but I hope we don't lose that.

**LS:** Now over the forty years, then, I'm sure you've met students that you have had, and maybe even their parents. Is that true?

**GB:** Yes. That's true. Before I retired, a few years (ago), I was out walking in one of the other buildings, and I heard from a distance, "Dr. Barlow?" A student caught up to me, and she said, "You don't know me, but my mother says hello, and my mother was in one of your first classes." So we chatted, and I said, "Tell your mother hello", so we went on our ways. Three, four, five, six years later, I was walking out in the mall, (Quad?), somewhere, going to another building. I heard, "Dr. Barlow", and I stopped and another student comes up, she said, "You don't know me", it was almost a replay, she said, "You don't know me, but my grandmother said to tell you hello, she was in one of your classes." I figure, "I think it's probably time for me to retire right about now", (laughs).

**LS:** Okay, well, thank you very much for the interview process, and we may get back to you at another time to add to this.

**GB:** Glad to, thank you.

**LS:** Thank you.