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William D. Evans interview, Assistant Professor Emeritus, College of Business and Former Associate Dean, Wright State University

Marlene Bireley
Wright State University - Main Campus

William D. Evans
Wright State University - Main Campus

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Retiree Association Oral History Project

Interview Date: December 6, 2002

Interviewer: Marlene Bireley
Professor Emeritus, College of Education and Human Services

Interviewee: William D. Evans
Assistant Professor Emeritus, College of Business
Associate Dean at the time of his retirement
Wright State University

This is Dr. Marlene Birely, Professor Emeritus, College of Education and Human Services. It's December 6, 2002, and I'm interviewing Dr. William Evans, who is Professor Emeritus, College of Business, and he was associate dean at the time of his retirement. Okay, the first thing I want to ask you, Bill, is to tell me a little about your background and what you did before you came to Wright State?

I was born in Youngstown, Ohio and spent my early childhood there. I graduated from South High School and joined the Air Force. I spent four years in the U.S. Air Force, in the States and overseas, and was a control tower operator and what we call a GCA, or ground control approach operator. At that time, what we used them for and developed was for the Berlin Airlift, which was very important, although I didn't work with the Berlin Airlift, but was a similar type of equipment. After graduation, the GI bill was available and I asked for that, and went to four years of undergraduate work at Youngstown State, then took up a teaching career at Canfield High School my first year. I married Sally McGranor during my last two years of college and we were interested in making our own way in life and getting away from our families, for some reason. So we moved to Michigan and I taught in public schools in Michigan for six years then got a graduate assistantship in the College of Business at Miami University.

After graduating from Miami, I came to Wright State in the fall of 1964, when Wright State first opened their doors. Dean Gloss [ph] interviewed me and told me about the position up here. It was surprising, they didn't know too much about what was going on up in Dayton. I don't believe that anybody at Miami was quite interested in coming to the cow town, the cow field in Dayton. Miami University is a very beautiful campus and it was a good university, and people teaching there were quite content to stay there. So I was hired as an instructor and came here in 1964. There were two of us in the College of Business. I taught in the business area and Eugene Elander taught in the economics area. I taught Introduction to Business and Accounting the first year and I believe even taught that in the second year. I was joined in the second year by Jerry Throckmorton and Dick Williams came aboard.

You were the first one in Business?

Yes, I was the first one in Business.

I know you have been thinking about some of the earlier things that happened, and I'm going to let you freewheel it here and talk about some of your most memorable experiences. They don't have to be academic. I know you have stories, so go right ahead.

I'm not going to talk about my academic accomplishments at Wright State. I mean, we all had our academic accomplishments.

First of all, I must say that I really enjoyed teaching at Wright State and working at Wright State and I wasn't happy to leave Wright State when I did, although I taught as a professor emeritus for 15 years. I was still willing to teach. But in the early days, I remember Sally and I came up to Dayton to look around, and we came to Wright State and when we first came- and my memory isn't always clear, and I didn't keep a journal, I did not keep a diary-

Many of us wish we would have.

I guess we should have at that time. But I remember driving into Wright State and the road was not complete. It was a dirt road. The building was not complete. I did meet- and I'm not certain if it was my first visit or second visit, whether I just came up here to look around and we kind of scouted for a place to live- I did meet on the campus, Fred White and Verna Graves at that time. There was a house out on an area I think they called it Achilles Hill and I'm trying to remember what the name of that house was called and I can't remember. It was called some house, and it had a name to it. [Warner House]

I think it was the name of one of the farmers, wasn't it? I think. Whoever owned the farm? [Original landowners of farmland where campus was being built]

It may have been. Someone must remember that, but I met Fred White and Verna-

People might not know who Verna was. Do you want to tell? Was she the Registrar, probably, at that point?

Verna may have... yes. She was some type of registrar at that time and got things started there. The first day, of course, was quite interesting. It was very crowded. We had more students than we had ever anticipated. I had one classroom that was a double classroom in Allyn Hall. It had folding doors. The doors had been opened up and the two rooms combined, and I had 80 some students in these two rooms that were built to hold maybe 30-35 students, and so I found myself up against I wouldn't call them blackboards, they were green boards. In fact when I came they didn't have all the equipment up and all the chalkboards up in some classrooms. But I remember the first day that television cameras were there and they were taping. Warren Abraham was- I'm not certain what his position was, whether he was Director of the campus at that time- but Warren Abraham came from Miami University and he was more or less in charge. We didn't have deans and we

didn't have department chairmen. I was the only one in Business per se, and we all taught in Allyn Hall, and I remember I went home that day and I told Sally that there were television cameras. Well, we had moved to Georgetown Apartments on Far Hills Avenue. They were just building the Georgetown Apartments, and when we came up here to move into our townhouse it was not complete, so they put us up in an apartment that was meant for, I believe they had rental type apartments or showing type apartments, and they had two of them there. Sally and I were in one of them with our two children and discovered that Norwood Marquis was in the other apartment right next to us. Judy and Norwood had intended to come into Georgetown, and I hadn't met Norwood at that time.

For the people who don't know, he was the first dean of the College of Education.

Yes, Norwood eventually became the dean of the College of Education. Those positions were later called directors and I'm not certain what Norwood's position was at that time, but they were living next to us in an apartment. So, we did not have our furniture; our furniture was in storage. When I went home, I said, "Geez, we've got to get a television set", and we went out and rented a television set. We needed one anyway and we got a television set and watched it on TV on the late news when they ran pictures of the campus and the opening day. The opening day was very busy and somewhat confusing, and classes overcrowded. We were all breaking new ground, which was understandable since we all came from different parts of the country and different schools, and we had no formal introduction to what the common curriculum was or what the courses would be. We knew pretty much what we had at Miami, which we followed, but as to how this would all be implemented at Wright State was down the road somewhere. We knew we had a fresh body of students here, eager to learn, so the first day was quite interesting, but very crowded and very hectic.

Did they have Allyn Hall finished?

Allyn Hall was finished, pretty much. Most of the administrators were on the first floor and I believe we had second and third floor the major part of classrooms, although we had some offices. Most of the offices were on the first floor. The Director of Admissions and the Registrar's office and Purchasing and so forth were on the first floor. I remember at the one end of Allyn Hall, we had the NCR Century 2000 or something computer, which took up a lot of space. I know at that time it was air conditioned and so forth, but I can remember that brought a lot of grief to a lot of people because the people in Science and Engineering I think felt the NCR 2000 was not the computer we should be having to register our students and so forth. Even then, I think they were talking about an IBM to do the job. When we registered students we had the punch cards, and we used the punch cards for a long time.

Any other kinds of stories that you can share?

One of the things they did, we had an elevator and later they put in a second elevator in Allyn Hall, but we had an elevator and they issued all of the faculty and I imagine all of

the staff a key to the elevator. In order to use the elevator you had to put a key in and turn the key. I guess the thought was the faculty and staff would use the elevator to go up to the classroom and the students would walk the stairways. However, the students would wait for the elevator to open when a faculty member was going up and would jump in. Of course, we expected the students to come up on the fourth floor to visit us and counsel with us, and sign up for classes, and we wanted to interact with them and wanted them to come up, we wanted to encourage them to do that. I'm not certain when it was that the key became inoperative, so to speak. They just turned it off and the elevator worked on its own. But that was a big mistake.

That was obviously before it was a university for disabled students, too.

Right, we didn't have disabled students. Obviously, a big mistake in deciding student needs. We had no facilities for serving students, per se. There wasn't a lot there. Faculty were expected to do the leg work and do all the student personnel type work for students. We were doing the counseling and signing them up. It was the faculty and a very limited staff at that time. Well, that's at least the first few weeks, some things that I remember.

One of the questions I am supposed to ask you- and you may have already answered so see if there is anything you want to add- are there any personal experiences, and I think you probably just covered that. How would you describe the character of Wright State during those early years?

Well, it's hard to say. I think it was pretty much a first generation of students going to college. I mean, in their families. There was a lot of concern about students not being ready for college. But on the other hand, we had many faculty who were teaching for the first time, and they weren't seasoned faculty. I think maybe we washed out many more students than we needed to the first year. The faculty were quite rigorous in the academic requirements that they thought about.

My experience at the university was always that new faculty members, coming straight off a doctoral program, sort of wanted freshman to function like doctoral students. So it took a little while for that.

Right. It took a few years to transition this whole thing as far as that is concerned, and I think that we lost a lot of students. Some of those students did come back, though, and we found in later years that they had come and they had had some poor experiences academically, and they went off and pursued some other things and then came back and were very good students. I worked on the petitions committee for a number of years because there were so few of us that we had to do all the jobs. We found a number of students who would petition to return, and it was necessary I think to try to clean up some student records at that time.

One of the things I remember, it was a pay date when I first came to Wright State. Of course, I came from Miami as a graduate assistant, and I think a lot of us came out of schools and were not that well established. I had a family and I was expecting to get paid

soon after I arrived. They said, "Oh, you get paid on the 15th". It was speculation we would get paid on the 15th of September, and we started school right after Labor Day. No, we wouldn't get paid on the 15th of September. We were going to get paid on the 15th, but it was going to be October 15th. So it was probably fortunate that Sally and I ended up in an apartment paid for by Georgetown Apartments and we didn't have to make a first rent payment.

A lot of hot dogs that month. [Laughs]

Right. In fact, when I first came- as many schools did, many public schools did- we were paid on a 9-month basis; we were not paid our contractual salary over 12 months. I was trying to remember how long that took place. It must have been three years or more, but at least three years that we were paid on a 9-month basis, our contractual salary. It wasn't until we had a director, J. B. Black came to the campus, and I might mention him later on, but as each of the schools has got to have a director, Norwood Marquis was the director of Education and Philip Bordinat was Liberal Arts- and I'll just stay on the Miami side- and J. B. Black was Business. We were meeting, there must have been 12 or 15 of us on the faculty at that time, and we always, our meetings met together, and J. B. said he had just come from some administrative offices and was going to ask us what we would prefer to be paid, would we prefer to continue to be paid on a 9-month basis or would we like to be paid over 12 months, spread it over 12 months. Without any question at all, all of us who were there on the faculty opted to be paid on a 12-month basis. J. B. Black had taught in finance at Miami and had come from Indiana, where they had a family lumber yard and so forth. He was just appalled. He could not figure out why faculty members in Business Administration would want to be paid over 12 months rather than 9 months, because he tried to explain to us the lost opportunity we had of time value of money, where we were letting that money sit with the university and not putting it in our pockets and using it. But we all felt we could probably better budget our expenses over 12 months.

I'm glad you got that straightened out before I got there in 1969.

Right. Because I think he may have been able to budget himself on 9 months over 12 months, but we felt we would just as well be paid over 12 months and have a pay check every month.

You mentioned some of the problems that were facing the university in the early years. Is there anything else? Not enough space? Everybody doing everything?

Yes. I think registration, of course, involved the entire faculty. Students would come and register and they would come to your table and then you would give them the registration for Business Administration, then they would go to the Education table, and they would get the card for their class. If the classes were limited to 25, we would have 25 punch cards to give out and when those were all given out, the class was presumably closed at that time. But the problem with closed classes at that time, we had many more students than we had spaces for. We always had more students than we could

accommodate, so there were a lot of problems as far as students being not only upset, but emotionally upset and crying, you know, how they were going to solve all that.

It wasn't a day you looked forward to.

Not registration. In fact, some registrations...I know I was at the campus one time in Allyn Hall when we had students stretched clear outside and we were there until probably midnight. It was just something that we had very little control over. It was very interesting.

I might mention something before I forget. You asked about the character of Wright State. We had a lot of togetherness and we knew everybody. I knew people, still know them today of course, and meet them on the street that were in Science & Engineering and were in Biology and were in the English department and Education. If I were to go out to Wright State today and teach in the College of Business, I would probably never meet someone in Chemistry or someone in Biology, or may not even meet somebody in Education or Liberal Arts, and you just teach in your own discipline. We interfaced a lot with other disciplines and I think that was very rewarding for a good many of us, when we were in that character. We formed something called the Academic Council in the early years and I think it must have been the second or third year. Jerry Throckmorton and Dick Williams, who were the other faculty members in Business, were quite anxious to see me elected to that because they didn't want to do that. But I got on the Academic Council, and I remember one time on the Academic Council in the very early years, we would meet in Allyn Hall and the laboratories for Science & Engineering were in Allyn Hall. There was a wing which was later on called the executive wing for many years, but the labs were in that. There were some large rooms in there where we could meet and have Academic Council. We had one fellow by the name of Mayer Benkoil [ph], who I think taught in the History area, and I remember he was complaining one day that he had come here from New York and he had this MG sports cars and he lived up on the north side of town somewhere, and somebody had stolen his car. He couldn't believe he had moved to a cow town like Dayton, Ohio, he could understand getting it stolen in New York, but getting it stolen in Dayton, Ohio was...I don't think Mayer Benkoil stayed at Wright State very long. I think Dayton was too much of a cow town for Mayer Benkoil.

You mentioned quite a bit about students, about colleagues, what about the interaction with Administration at that point in time? How did they fit in to the scheme of things?

Well, in the early years a lot of things went on with interaction with the Administration, and especially after we named the new president, Brage Golding. I remember that during the early years, during the Vietnam War, we had demonstrations on campus. I remember Dr. Golding speaking out on the quadrangle to the students and he was distributing a document, a paper concerning the thesis that universities are not democratic institutions, that they have to have rules and the Administration had to make decisions. It was a very difficult time in the early years because we were learning to become a faculty and were

becoming an institution, and one that had to develop as an institution with its rules and regulations. Yet we had the Vietnam War going on at the same time in the '60s.

I remember that well.

It was difficult sometimes for the students to reconcile some of the need for rules and regulations in their demonstrations, as far as the Vietnam War was concerned. I know when the Kent State incident happened, many times the dean would leave campus and I would be asked to be in charge of the administrative end of the college. Then the Kent State riot took place, and evidently we had a faculty member who was putting up placards throughout the university concerning Vietnam and demonstrations and what was happening at Kent State. Dr. Golding called me and was very upset about this person and demanding that I take some action in this whole area. In fact, I remember in the early days Dr. Golding called me and said he had been reading the yearbook, not the yearbook, but the catalog that we had put out. It wasn't in the catalog, it was in the telephone book, he was using the telephone book and he said, "I see you say that people belong to the Department of Quantitative Analysis." He was on the telephone. I said, "Yes, we have a Department of Quantitative Analysis." He said, "I can't understand this. Quantitative analysis, you do in the Chemistry Department." He said, "I'm a chemist and you do not do that in Business." I tried to explain to him what our quantitative analysis was in our College of Business. We changed that, of course, to Information Systems now, and so forth. But I remember it was a learning situation and we had to learn to adapt to a lot of different things, and learn to make rules. In fact, I had to write some rules on what were called...you teach full-time and then you had overload teaching, and there was a concern about how much time faculty were teaching overload. So we had to develop in the College of Business a standard operating procedure, I guess I would call it in the Air Force when I was there, but some rules outlining overload teaching and what was expected and how much time you should spend on campus, and so forth. It was very difficult to write those because you would write them from a viewpoint of a maybe more strict standpoint than maybe faculty members were used to or you do in an academic setting, so it became a balancing act how you designed all that. It took a lot of work to develop that new working relationship there, just as it would today if you would go out to the College of Business or College of Education, you will see a number of administrative people, and there is one office in most of the colleges now where one or two people deal primarily with the budget. But yet the budget would fall on the assistant dean or the associate dean's desk, along with the scheduling, along with everything else, so I felt I worked not 100%, but maybe 150% of the time.

When did you become Associate Dean or Assistant Dean?

At first we didn't have such positions and I was Assistant to the Dean, then Assistant Dean. I was Assistant Dean for a number of years. I forget exactly when, but I became Associate Dean after I was there and seasoned a number of years. As the schools began to develop, they would have Assistant Deans and then would develop into the Associate Deans. I think the faculty became more confident in that person serving as Assistant Dean and then you could move more to the Associate Dean category, where you had

more than just administrative, but you had something to say dealing with curriculum and academics.

Okay, and then you remained in that position until...

Until 1985, when I retired.

Okay, if you were asked-
[end of recording]