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Elizabeth Harden interview, Professor Emeritus, Department of English, Wright State University

Lewis Shupe

Wright State University - Main Campus

Elizabeth Harden

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WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
Retiree Association Oral History Project

Interview date: 3/31/2011

Interviewer: Lewis Shupe
Emeritus, Dept. of Communication

Interviewee: Elizabeth Harden

Lewis Shupe: This is Lewis Shupe, Professor Emeritus from the Department of Communication at Wright State University. Today is March 31st, 2011. I have the pleasure of interviewing Dr. Elizabeth Harden, Professor Emeritus from the Department of English, as part of the Wright State University Retiree Association's Oral History Project. Dr. Harden, may I call you Liz?

Elizabeth Harden: Absolutely.

LS: Okay, it's a pleasure to have you ...

EH: Thank you

LS: Being interviewed today. And could you start off by telling us a bit about your background, where you came from, what your previous experience was, just introduce yourself to us.

EH: Thank you very much. I can even go back to childhood if you want me to go back that far. (LS laughs) But, let me just say that I was reared on a small farm, south-central Kentucky, um, it was a lovely area, you know, like at wolf creek lake and down there. Went to grade school and high school there, graduated valedictorian and, um, did my undergraduate work at Western Kentucky University. Those are four of my happiest years; I loved Western Kentucky. I became a member of the debate team, debate squad, won all sorts of honors, if I may say so, including one international speech contest. But it was just a remarkable, going from the little pig-tailed girl, you know, from the farm; to the cosmopolitan University which Western was then. So I told my mother, I said, I want to go to Graduate School, I don't want to teach in high school here, and she said, "Well, tell me more about it." So, um, a nice assistantship came through, I just grabbed it when it first came through from the University of Arkansas, and in order to get accepted, you know, financially, I worked in Louisville that summer with an interstate financing office, if you can imagine an English major in a finance office. And, but it worked out just fine and then I, um, started my attendance working on the masters a thousand miles from home at the University of Arkansas. I liked it immediately there. The folks, of course, many of them, many of the students at least, came from all over parts of the South. And

you'd hear these different Southern accents, you know, one could be from Mississippi, and one would be maybe from Alabama, and maybe somebody from Georgia.

LS: Speaking of that, what is their mascot? That they're considered?

EH: Oh, goodness, ah the night...

LS: Is it the Hawks?

EH: It's the Hawks. Thank you very much. See how memory is elusive? (Laughs)

LS: And you were talking about the dialect. (Laughing)

EH: Oh! And when we would beat, you know, certain teams, we'd call hogs nearly all night. Go down to George's, which was our hangout, you know, where we had our beer and crumpets and whatever. But, um, any rate, the masters went well, I took a position then at Southwestern Missouri State in Springfield. At these little "hop around" positions really you're getting enough to pay back your debts and to go back to graduate school. So I was there for a year, went back to the University of Arkansas, stayed, I believe it was 2 years, and then I took a position at Murray State University in Kentucky. And, um, there are good things about these rather unknown Universities because you can get a certain things accomplished. For example, I passed my German while I was teaching at Murray. The professor at Arkansas allowed us to do that, you know? So I took his class and I was able to get the German the first time. Something similar to that happened with French. But, uh, those were very difficult things to pass at Arkansas, they were hurdles. I knew one family that were staying just so that the husband could pass the languages.

To get on along with, ah, the career, I taught then at Sou... I'm sorry, at Northeastern in Oklahoma, and I stayed there 2 years because it was very close to the University of Arkansas. And I did not want to lose my professor. I had 5 classes under him, and he directed my dissertation. And, but, he would be leaving for Auburn the next year. So I stayed on Northeastern the second year, and was able to finish up my comprehensives, and he directed my dissertation. So, um, I said if I got to that point of finishing up all my work I would go to the commencement. You know, a lot of students when they get through that they say, "Oh, I don't know about going to the commencement." I went back to the commencement, ah, only one of my professors was there, um, but I was a very proud lady. I remember calling mother that evening and saying, "Mom, I am now Dr. [redacted]." Well, she said, "Well, I knew you were quite smart sweetie." And she said, "I'm awfully proud of ya." So, that kinda gets me to that stage, I'd be happy to talk about Wright State if you want me to.

LS: Well, what I'd like to ask you now is when and how did you first hear about Wright State University?

EH: Ah, let me, I'll tell you how, um, I actually applied at our sister school, Miami. And Miami, I think, was sending most of us over here, to this new, young University just getting started over eventually.

LS: When was that? What year? Can you remember?

EH: It would have been around '66, I guess.

LS: Okay

EH: It would have been, yes. So I came over, ah, actually I interviewed with Peter Bracher in New York at the MLA. And he said, "Why are you leaving Wichita, which was the last University I had taught at. And I said, "Well, he's, he's stressing only the new criticism." To which Peter, Peter, Dr. Bracher said, laughingly, "What's that?"

LS: (laughs)

EH: and so he didn't know the New Criticism, he didn't know. But, um, all those school I had mentioned provided varying experiences in terms of the chairs of the department and they handled programs and whatever. So when I came here, I felt like I was an elder already, ya know, having had that experience, teaching experience.

LS: And was that 1966?

EH: It would've been 1966 when I came here.

LS: When you came to Wright State. Okay.

EH: Wright State, yes. There were 2 buildings as I recall. Millett was established, but I believe Allyn was the first building.

LS: Uh huh.

EH: And then Millett. And having been in those established schools, of course I would love to give you my impression (chuckles) of Wright State.

LS: That's the question that I want to ask, "What was your impression of Wright State?"

EH: (Laughing) A cornfield with crows, um, 2 buildings, one not quite yet finished. Ah, enormous enthusiasm among all of us youngsters then, ya know, we were *young* back then! Ah, there was a wonderful cooperation from the community, very much in favor, you know the big, ah, fundraiser that they had, I'll call it that. Half of the money would go to the University of Dayton, for a new student center, and half of it would come to us to start the kernel of what would hopefully become a new University. So, um, I found it very refreshing to look out to those cornfields and see the squirrels and crows, and whatever.

LS: So you were excited by that?

EH: I was excited.

LS: Okay

EH: I was, there was a freshness about a new school that I had not been able to observe before. And coming here almost as a senior professor, you know, um, I just enjoyed the youth and the enthusiasm, and um, the ah, committed, we were committed, so many of those early years we were working as you know on programs and trying to get our curricular straightened out and ah, um, getting administrators placed in the right positions and teachers at the right, ah, you know, level ...

LS: Who were some of the people with whom you worked at that time, do you remember?

EH: Well, in one way I worked with Brage Golding, but only from the English department, you know, I mean I interviewed and would report back to him, a little bit of that sort of thing. Um, Larry Hussman was chosen by the department to be the first chair and Dr. Golding just didn't quite think that Larry fit the, ah, pigeonhole there and appointed Dr. Braucher as the acting deputy chairman. He thought of us as a group of young people who weren't quite dry behind the ears, you know. But I always thought Golding was a good speaker and ah, had a good voice and *meant* well, I think. He had an interesting sense of humor, you know. He ah, we had the presidents back as you know, several times, and the last time, I think, Dr. Golding was back I said, I shook hands with him and said that I was so sorry I'd heard that his wife had passed away. And I said, "I'm so sorry." Well, he said, "I am, too." Ya know? (laughter) But he had a lady friend with him so I think everything was fine. You can strike that if you wish.

LS: No, that's fine. It's part of the story.

EH: Right.

LS: Who was Dean of the college at that time, do you remember?

EH: Yes I do, it's gonna take me a minute or two...

LS: Well, when it comes back to you, just tell me.

EH: It'll come back. Okay.

LS: What were some of the courses you taught?

EH: Well, of course, we all taught freshman English at that time. You'll be interested in this, that I was hired to be the Romantic Specialist. And so, you know, that's just my cup of tea; I still get teary eyed over John Keats. And Wordsworth. I've told my colleagues about, you know, my husband and I did a lot of travelling in Europe, and I'd always ask him, "Let's go to the literary homes." And so the day we visited Keats' grave, it was lunch time, and the guy said, "No, no, no, no, no! We can't let you in!" And I said, "Oh,

sir,” I said, “I *must* come in. Of course, I’m an English professor and I’m expected to show slides and talk to my students.” Well, I went to Keats’ grave, and I knelt down and tears rolled down my eyes. He said, I teach with a great deal of passion, and this group of poets, you know, they lend themselves to passion.

LS: You know you’re legendary for having a classroom experience that is Romantic. Could you just give us a picture of one of your Romantic lectures (laughs) in the classroom?

EH: (Laughing) Well, one of the, the students love the passion that I have, and it’s very real, I mean, I feel that about these poems. In fact, at my husband’s, my late husband’s mausoleum program, I read from the Romantic poets, and um, I think that, for example, teaching a class in Keats, you must teach *The Eve of St. Agnes*. And I could tell that the students weren’t getting into the narrative. So I played old Angela, ya know, the old nurse who lets Porphyro into ... ah, St. Agnes room. The date was January 22nd, of each year, it’s the coldest night of the year, St. Agnes Eve. So they’re from warring families, and um, Angela was the old nurse who let Porphyro into, um, St. Agnes’ room. I mean, she was a virgin, I mean, obviously something is going on there when he gets into the room. But she’s warning him that they are warring families, so I mimic her: (In an accent:) “Mercy, Porphyro, hie thee from this place, they’re all here tonight, though, bloodthirsty raves... Get hence! Get hence! There’s ... [mumbling..] And so, they just, you could hear a pin drop.

LS: (laughing) I remember, I think, walking by one time, your classroom, and I saw a lighted candle in your room.

EH: We were doing Samuel Taylor Coleridge. It was a night class, and the students themselves had decided that we must have some candles, ya know, Coleridge and the metaphysical part of his work and the supernatural. The supernatural. So here we were all gathered around this table, the students just kinda took over the class! And they’d done papers, they did a little bit of mimicking, ya know, “Oh, tell me, tell me, sweet Cristabell,” ya know, but um, no, I guess I really feel that strongly about ... the whole nineteenth century actually. Robert Browning is fun to teach, I mean, but he’s not a William Wordsworth, ya know.

LS: Now, what were some of the events that were happening on campus, that you remember, that were either national or worldwide or just local?

EH: I should remember, they’re in my notes, um...

LS: Did anything strike you that kind of led you, to some of the things that the faculty at that time had to deal with?

EH: Kent State, of course, ya know, made national headlines.

LS: Uh huh

EH: Uh ... we were getting into that era of history I think, uh, student protests, and that would have been ... which war?

LS: That would have been following Vietnam War.

EH: The Vietnam War that was part of it, Women's liberation was taking root. And it was just a time of, ah, is festing my word? You know, things were not settled, I mean, there were lots of protests and lots of disagreements about things. I have in my notes a lot of things, but you told me not to use them, but there are a lot of national things.

LS: Tell us what the students were like, at that time.

EH: Um, very disciplined. You'd think that's a strange word to use for the sixties, right? But, generally, we were, remember that we're in a different situation because we're starting a new University. About 3200 students, according to what my memory, that first year, and uh, as you know, most of our students did, anyway, work outside jobs to be able to attend Wright State. So, they were very serious minded students. And, uh, kinda reminded me about my own student days, ya know, which weren't all that far away from those early sixties. But, uh, at any rate, I thought of them as being ... we gave a lot of our time to students in conferences in those days. And I think that was very useful; they could see that we were serious, you know. So, that's the way that I remember the students, and even today I'll still get an email once in a while from a former student.

LS: It's nice to remember those ...

EH: Uh huh

LS: Where was your office?

EH: It was right across from the English Department office, right there in the hall.

LS: In?

EH: Straight across in Millett.

LS: In Millett.

EH: Right. You know I didn't take the rest of my story, because I've done a lot of administrative work here. Starting, always the bridesmaid, but never the bride. I was Thomas Wetmore's assistant chair, and director of Freshman English. I frankly did most of the work, but, you know, I didn't mind. I mean, I felt that we were moving forward and I wanted to be a part of this huge drama. And, uh, even from that early point we had a good department, ya know, people work well together. Then I went on to be an Assistant Associate Dean in the College of Liberal Arts, over curriculum and scheduling. And the chairs were always coming into my office, because we were working on course descriptions. And, you know, folks like, who was the guy in art? He's wonderful in art,

but not so much in English composition. So, he had this white ink all dropping off his paper, where he'd tried to revise some of his language, you know? (Laughs) But, at any rate then, that was an interesting experience. I got to know the chairs ya know, of the departments, quite well. Then I went from there to the Wing.

LS: Let me come back to the college. Which Dean did you work with when you were the assistant?

EH: Cantelupe.

LS: Ah, Cantelupe? When did you start working with Dean Cantelupe?

EH: I can tell you in just a moment ... '68, '69, '69, '70.

LS: Uh huh, so you came here before he did? Or was he ...

EH: About the same time, I'd say. Dr. Spiegel had known him in the University of New York and I think had recommended him highly, so.

LS: Now, I interrupted you on your history of your service to the University.

EH: Oh, I went on over to the Wing. Executive Director of General University services. I had all of them on academic services under me, including food service and uh, the book store. And I had Don Bell, remember him? And his friend who was over the traffic area. But, I must say, that I had as my staff, all men, except for one person. And that was, uh, Pal ... Mrs. O'Brien. And so she wanted to report to the president, so that was uh, carried out so she could do that. But I just want to say that I have the most pleasant memories about my administrative experience over there, in terms of my staff. But, we hadn't gotten a lot of the record straightened out about who reported to whom. And some of the men, I think, we've all had to grow, that's the point I really want to make, we've had to grow, uh, intellectually, administratively, we've had to grow with the community, um, men reporting to women or women reporting to men, or however it should work out. And I think we almost have that problem solved. Maybe not, nationally. It wasn't solved at the point that I was in the way.

LS: Uh huh, you mentioned wrinkles, can you remember a few of the wrinkles?

EH: You mean little by-ways that didn't quite go right? Um, other than uh, things, well, I mean, I have so much of a list I could write a book about it. But there were problems with one of the administrators, I didn't know if I were able to talk about this or not, but one of them was voted "No Confidence" if you remember.

LS: Uh huh. We don't need the name.

EH: Oh, okay, okay.

LS: If you did write a book what would be the title? You said, "I could write a book about that."

EH: I haven't quite figured that out yet. Uh...

LS: If I ask you, could you recreate that song about the Wing?

EH: (Laughing) I don't remember all of it by any means, but I could do one or two verses.

LS: Do. Just at least a start to it.

EH: Tom Wilson, by the way, wrote the words, and, uh, what's his name who was very well known in music accompanied me that day, you were there.

LS: Uh huh, I was there.

EH: (Singing) All I want is a room somewhere, does the Wing have a suite to spare? With one big swivel chair. Wouldn't it be lovely? Lots of flunkies for me to fire. Lots of stewies for me to hire. More power to this old briar. Now wouldn't it be lovely? (adds snapping) Oh, wouldn't it be lovely being everybody's ... ach, I don't remember. Full respect. But that's the way, well, I still have the lyrics to think of. (Laughs)

LS: (Laughing) Okay. Good. What were the responses from some of the people that day?

EH: Well, they seemed to enjoy it enormously. We got almost a standing ovation. (Laughs)

LS: I remember having been there, you know? Um, let's come back to the students, okay, you started to talk that they were really attentive, how did they compare to the other students you have worked with in the past at other institutions? (pause) Can you make any comparisons?

EH: I think, I think, that I can say that they were differently motivated, because 9/10ths of them had outside jobs. And some of them were married with families, you know? And that well, ah, I'm gonna make this statement, that that matures a student in a different way than just an 18-year-old or 20-year-old, not having had much challenge that way. I, you won't believe it, but I have a cardboard box that large, and guess what's in it? It's full of my finest student papers.

LS: Your students from here.

EH: From here. And I could not bring myself to throw those. I just couldn't. Because some of them were actually working at a graduate level. By the way, do you remember that some of our, many of our classes were, could be taken for graduate or undergraduate

credit? Some of those graduate students were about as good as any that you'd find anywhere. Really and truly.

LS: So these were students in the late '60s, early '70s?

EH: Yes, that's right.

LS: And you still have those papers?

EH: I still have the papers.

LS: That might be interesting to see if some of those are archival.

EH: That's ah, I'm sure that some of them would be. You'd have to educate me, because I don't know what's available to me, I don't come up and ...

LS: You see those reflect memories of what we're trying to discover in the oral history.

EH: Okay, there would be a lot of interesting things in those papers. By the way, let me give you one of a freshman student, and I will never forget that student. You know those little old topics you give like in the summer session to freshman English students. And, uh, you gave simple topics like, it's a definition theme, actually, "What is a successful person?" And this student said, "So what if you don't want to be successful? What if you want to be unsuccessful?" And I tell you, I laughed 'til tears rolled down, because he was telling you how to slight your work and to miss classes and don't ever open a book and all, you know. And um, but it really was well done, I think the paper got an "A." Because it was a point of view, ya know, that was realistic. Isn't that a nice little turn there? Of the assignment?

LS: It is. Well, see, if I remember you had the reputation of being very strict. Or a good teacher.

EH: Yeah

LS: You held high standards.

EH: I was taught that way. I mean it pains me to see a dangling participle, or a misspelled word.

LS: (laughing)

EH: I almost have to leave the room. (Laughs)

LS: What do you think about split infinitives?

EH: Or dangling modifiers. (Laughs)

LS: Initially when you came to Wright State, how long did you anticipate you would stay here?

EH: Well, you know, I came as a newlywed, I forgot to tell you that. Dennis and I had just married that summer. I had finished a Ph.D. I had gone with this girlfriend and her two stepdaughters to Europe, okay. I visited some of the literary homes then with her. And she was kind of a Art person and wanted to see Beatrice Potter and things like that, you know? But I got back and, uh, doctorate finished, I had a contract for a book, and I had taken a job at Wright State. Would you like to hear this little scenario about how I met my husband?

LS: Well, I'll come back to that. Continue with the, your coming to Wright State.

EH: Well I hadn't thought ... yes, I already had the job here, so my late husband said that he would be willing to move. He was with Household Finance and would be willing to move into this area. They moved him to Cincinnati and came over then. We had an apartment over in Woodman Park apartments.

LS: Why did you stay as long as you have? At Wright State?

EH: Well, I think you have to look ahead, there are certain games that have to be played, but I'm gonna phrase that differently. There's a certain kind of discipline that you have to follow if you want to get to the top. Now the top in Academe means that you are full professor with tenure, okay? You might remember that I was the first female full professor in the English department and in the college of Liberal Arts. But it was because I had all these things coming in. I have even tutored young women. A couple three have come to me, you know, as kind of a mentor. "Dr. Harden, what do I have to do to get ahead?" And I said, "It's written out for you very plainly. Teaching, scholarship and service." But I said, "You can't be mediocre, you know?" Particularly in your service, you have to show leadership ability, you know. But you know, an interesting thing about Wright State is that you can work your heart out here in service, which I really did, but still have my heart. But, what about outside service? Well, I said, "I travelled 41 countries, and," I said, "I brought back slides, I've written papers about them, I've worked with them in class, what I've seen, to let them have visions of these poems, poets homes and things. To me, that's outside service. I think they were finally convinced.

LS: Uh huh. If I say the name Elvis Presley, do you react?

EH: Oh, yes, I'm ready to get on my dancing shoes. (laughs) Do my twist; probably get you up on the floor with me, if you'd accept my invitation.

LS: Do you know why I asked you about that?

EH: You knew that I liked Elvis?

LS: Uh huh. Yeah. (Both laughing.)

EH: well, that was the Elvis era, you know? That many of us lived through, including you. But there was something magnetic about that guy. I just adored him. And somebody, you know, who's that down to earth and yet that talented. You forgive him for a lot of his sins, you know? So, we don't worry about sins, we're listening to the music.

LS: Let me come back to just, the early days. If you could describe Wright State with one word, what would it be? At that time?

EH: (long pause) Let me think about that just a moment. I'm thinking, probably improperly, about the stages in life, for example, we went through the childhood and that would have been the childhood when we had the first building and the two buildings. Then, as we begin to grow and to get our programs together, and get our faculty hired, get our administrators and things, that's adolescence. And then when we really grow, and we are becoming now a nationally known university, uh, I would love to tell you this little story about basketball, but now I'll wait for you to ask me.

LS: Okay, but give me one word before you tell me about basketball.

EH: I can't... something so simple as "childhood?"

LS: Okay, that's fine.

EH: And then adolescence and then maturity.

LS: Almost Shakespearean, the "ages of man."

EH: (laughing) Right.

LS: Now basketball.

EH: Okay, uh, I um, you know, my late husband, was always, he, he loved basketball more than he loved to eat, I think went hungry. Coming from Kentucky, it didn't take much persuasion for me. So we, uh, at one point in our lives, several years, we attended *every* game. Over in the old gym, ya know? And that old place shook, I mean, we were so in, that place was packed, you could feel the rafters almost, you know, shaking with enthusiasm of the crowd. But, as president of the faculty, and I'm proud of that, I think, of that position more than any other one. Um, I wanted to do things, I wanted us to accomplish things, and you know, the faculty cooperated with me beautifully. They really truly did. And I was reading over some of my notes from the Steering Committee, just for entertainment, and every committee had been there. You know, at the last meeting, and had their reports all ready, just like a group of good students. But I argued with them about going to Division One. Remember, Jacob, Jim Jacob, and Charles Hartlin?

LS: Uh huh.

EH: They had not been able to get it through the faculty.

LS: Who did you follow as president?

EH: Jim Jacob.

LS: Jim Jacob, okay.

EH: Jim would (laughing), he was still in the age, I think, of adolescence. (Laughing) He told Amol once in a steering committee meeting once, he said, "Amol? Now you put that cigarette out, you hear me? You put that out." And, Amol, you know how he would, actually he was chewing a cigar, I think. But uh, you know, I uh, what is the term that I want, when you work for something? I went around and I knocked doors. (Knocks on table)

LS: Uh huh.

EH: I went to the School of Medicine, I went to the School of Professional Psychology, I went to the School of Nursing, they let me make a speech, over at the School of Nursing. Uh, I wanted that so much.

LS: Now, you're talking about Division ...

EH: Basketball going Division One.

LS: Okay.

EH: Because we can have all the books in the library we want. But, most likely we will not become a nationally known institution unless we have one heck of a good, I should say, intercollegiate athletics program, which takes in the 12 or 14 sports, ya know.

LS: Now, are you saying that you were the one instrumental in motivating Division One?

EH: I would say absolutely.

LS: Okay.

EH: Absolutely. Ask Kusack.

LS: How? What did you do?

EH: Ask Kusack, and see what he thinks about it. Once in a while he'll tell you the truth (laughing).

LS: (Laughs) No, you tell us about what he would say.

EH: He would be limited in his vocabulary in terms of what he would say. I think, though, it's hard to talk about yourself, though I'm just babb... going on and on.

LS: You're doing very well.

EH: I provided the kind of leadership that, uh, impressed people. And I didn't have a lot of difficulty getting faculty, asking them to be on this committee or to do this or that. Um, the Dean of Medicine, I thought I'd never forget his name. he ran for the presidency, by the way, and didn't get it, Dean Belchet, made a special trip back from a meeting in Columbus to speak to and to vote on Division One. Now that's the kind of influence, I think that I had, anyway. I think it's one of the finest things we've ever done.

LS: When did we do that? What year? Do you remember?

EH: Let's see, I would've been President in 1984-85, it would've been around 1987.

LS: That we went Division One.

EH: Approximately, yeah. We were first; well actually, let me think about it, just a minute. We were in Division Two already, that's the way it was, and we wanted, we had a lot of fine games in Division Two. You know, fine opponents and whatever. But, it's one of the things that bring us together. By the way, an offshoot of going Division One was the creation of the Alma Mater. And I chaired that committee, and um, we had about five people on it. Alma Maters can be, uh, heavenly and beautiful, and they can be among the worst written lyrics in existence.

LS: Tell us how that came out, and by whom.

EH: Uh, they were uh, going to vote on the Wisson Garrison, they were going to go for that, it obviously was the best of those submitted. But, Charles Berry, I don't think Charles would mind my saying this, he was standing up for principles. He said he thought an Alma Mater should be a lyric poem, and that this one was too "pedestrian." I wanted to see that one through so I met Garrison in the hall one day and I said, you know, it would change just a few words. He said, no, that he spent many many hours on that and that he refused to budge. I saw him at a fitness center the other day. I said, "Did you know that you were famous?" and he just laughed. I said, "We sing it at the end of every basketball game. So everybody knows at least the first verse." But anyway, that was a fun talk, you know, to go back. He said, "How old are ya?" I said, "Wah ..."

LS: Did he ask you that?

EH: I said, "I'm 39."

LS: (Laughs)

EH: He said, "Well, I'm 66." And I said, "You don't look bad for your age." (Laughs) You see, this is the relationship I had with faculty. Just right now I've been hugging everybody in the English department.

LS: You have? What about other departments?

EH: Well, I hadn't made my rounds yet, I guess I'll have to knock on doors to get (laughing) Have you seen any nice, unattached men that I could knock their doors? You take that one out of there.

LS: We'll look out for that. (Laughs) What other topics would you like to discuss, briefly, about your experiences at Wright State?

EH: Um, those who are in faculty governments would enjoy remembering the roasts.

LS: Uh huh.

EH: Because as each ... you know, because we went from Vice President, Mulholland didn't care what it was called so we immediately made it retroactive. To all of us that were presidents of the faculty. Makes sense, I think, more for some than others. But, anyways, let's say that for example, um, um, Jim Hughes was roasted. I was always the speaker that got up because I always put a lot into it. And so I started out with a quote with him, from, it was serious and polished, a quote from Virginia Woolf about knowing the outline, but not the content. It was, you know how Woolf can write beautifully. And I worked it in to bring in all of Jim's uh, teaching awards. You know, read Virginia Woolf and then you say, "Dr. Jim Hughes was the first to win the Robert J. Kegerreis teaching award for excellence." And then you go back to the Woolf, and bring your voice down a little bit. Just perfect lines out of "To the Lighthouse." But now, those roasts were fun. They weren't all equally eligible for fine prose (laughing).

LS: (Laughing) I remember *your* roast.

EH: Oh my goodness! (Laughs)

LS: I would prefer that we may not, that we don't, say some of those things that were done then. Okay, how did the Over the Hill Gang concept develop? Do you remember?

EH: I'm not following you.

LS: You, the past presidents were known as "Over the Hill." How did that originate?

EH: Oh. I don't know, but let me give you another little anecdote I've had in my notes. I was entertained by my own notes the other evening. You know? I thought, "Oh my god, did I do all of that, ya know?" But, it was after the last Faculty Meeting, everything

had gone beautifully, every issue in the program passed. Ferrari came up in [indistinct]. I've got all kinds of lovely notes from Presidents, you know and things that I've done. But, um, I was just waiting for someone to, uh; Harlan and Jacob never wanted to walk with me. So, I just held my head up a little bit higher and you know, I ran into them one day and I said, "I'm gonna win this, I'm gonna win the Presidency." Jacob said, "How do you know?" I said, "I just know." People's reactions to me, you know? But the point is, somebody came along and said, "Waiting for your hearse?" And I said, "No Sir, waiting for good dough [indistinct]" You know, faculty can be pretty rancid sometimes if they want to be.

LS: See now, you're talking about government, which, faculty government, right?

EH: That is true, that is true. I'm sorry I do get excited.

LS: No, that's fine.

EH: Did you want to do more with teaching? Or ?

LS: Well, what would you like to tell us further about teaching?

EH: Well, one thing I noticed in *The Guardian* which is relatively related, is that the uh, *Nexus* is coming back, the literary magazine. And uh, I thought that did a nice service for the students. It gave them a mouthpiece for all kinds of things, even if they were criticizing, they generally did it in a mannerly way, you know. Finally glad to see that, and they're inviting faculty to submit essays too, if we'd like, ya know.

LS: Did you have any involvement with student activities? Like in getting *Lexus* started, *Nexus* started?

EH: Not in that sense. I got two student awards, though, believe me, for service. Which I thought, I was very honored, to get those. I just, you know, you go along, and you work hard, and you don't know that anybody is noticing, you know.

LS: Things have changed then, since you came here.

EH: Yes.

LS: What is your impression of some of the changes that have come about?

EH: Well, I haven't, unfortunately, been deeply involved in the activities of the University since I took the retirement. There's so many things, we could do, retirement is another one, but we won't. But, the thing about it is, that your time will be taken up, one way or another when you're on the retirement. You're not on this heavy schedule, but you stay busy and involved, anyway. I'd have to speak sort of like an outsider, to tell you quite honestly. It seems that we are again uh, increasing or expanding programs, programs. I think that the international scene is changing, that it's being more highly

supported by the administration, I think that's great. I think it's wonderful that students get a chance to try wherever they want to go, you know. And uh, in that sense, I think that there's change.

LS: Before we get too far away from the literary magazine, do you have any remembrances of the paper? The student paper? And that first edition?

EH: Yes, I do. I do.

LS: How did that originate?

EH: God, we're really going back now. It was the faculty member who taught creative writing, whose name I'm gonna forget right now, who started that magazine, as I recall. And I thought it was a very good quality, you know?

LS: Do you remember the Mad River Review?

EH: I do.

LS: Would you tell us about that?

EH: Well, again, it's been so long, uh, I can remember the face of the guy who started it, isn't that amazing? Is this the face that launched a thousand ships? (Laughs). And then I had a professor at Arkansas who did a little, uh, parody of that, uh, "Is this the pace that helped a thousand hips?" (laughs).

LS: Could you repeat that?

EH: Is this the pace that helped a thousand hips?

LS: I got it, but I think that was well worth repeating. Okay, the ...

EH: But, you're asking some very good questions. I'm sure that, if I had reviewed, I would have a better memory. I just remember that it succeeded, and then as in each case, kinda dropped off, ya know.

LS: Now, see the important thing is, how you're recalling some of these events is exactly what we want.

EH: Okay, good. But I remembered um, that they were an advantage, they were an extra extension of the English department and what it was doing, and I thought, I would very much, heck, I might even write something for it myself if they invite faculty, you know.

LS: Uh huh.

EH: And some of our remembrances might be kind of interesting.

LS: That would be nice. What is the most exciting thing that has happened to you at Wright State?

EH: [long pause] I think that probably being president of the faculty. Administratively that's the most exciting, absolutely, we were able to accomplish more, and I just got right into the middle of it and loved it. Unlike the other administrative posts that I had, doing other people's work and getting no credit. Uh, teaching, teaching, um, I was really excited to be hired in, actually, for the Romantic Lit, well, 19th Century as a whole.

LS: Well, as I ask you what was the most exciting, what would have been one of the most discouraging, or one of your most "down" experiences?

EH: Not being allowed to do my work that I'd been hired to do. And that occurred particularly in the Wing.

LS: The work. What work were you hired to do?

EH: Those five major um, like the food service, and the bookstore, and um there were five of them anyway. It was somebody else trying to take over my job. And I finally wrote the person to whom I reported, you know, that either I'd ... you don't have to have a lot of knowledge about food service, if you had good people working for you, you'd learn from them. I didn't need anybody to come down and tell my people what to do when they were painting the rust color, ya know? And, uh, it was pure misery if you want to know the truth about it. I profited by the experience, but I just stayed in the Wing 2 years. I had a wonderful excuse for going back, and that was the opportunity to write another book.

LS: To go back ...?

EH: To my department. And they have always been like a family to me. They welcomed me back, even when I got up and did that infamous speech, that "Lady in Red"? The department never condemned me for that. Never. Now, I don't know if you want that kind of thing, but we're just talking turkey now.

LS: Okay, tell me at least one of those, okay? Like the "Lady in Red." I remember that.

EH: Oh, the speech, that uh, yes. Well, now if you remember it, there's not too much for me to say! I knew, though, I had... I knew. And this is what it's like to be a person of conscience, to be much too honest, really. My sister tells me, I say, "Marjorie I don't need another mother." But she's always, you know, she's a lot older than i. I knew, when that faculty meeting came around, I had not spoken to anyone, to anybody, that I was gonna get up there. Jake Dorn was the president then. I don't know now if I'm supposed to say these things or not. But, he, I went by his office before the meeting. I always tried to do things in proper order. And, he um, said, "Now, we're gonna have to have somebody get up there and speak, on behalf of the faculty. This thing's supposed to

go through.” Well, guess who got up and spoke in front of half of the faculty? And it went swimmingly, 180-140 something. And afterwards, you know? When I went by his office afterwards, he was a changed person. Now, you know, you might have hurt somebody very much. I said, “He’s already hurting the entire university.”

LS: Well, now, you’re referring in a sense to some of the struggles that went on with the faculty.

EH: The struggles, that’s right. Uh huh. But you know, um, the chart of that time, which I kept all this. I might have some things that you’ll really be interested in. It showed every single area in the university reported to this gentleman, except for two staff members. I don’t think anyone that reported to him had faculty experience. It was that bad at that point. If you believe as I do, see I believe in quality. I believe in having the credentials. If you’re supposed to have them, don’t pretend that you have them, you know? And um, but I think the gentleman had a great deal of difficulty working with women, especially those who were qualified. So, those were the worst of times. And there were some more definitely great times. Almost nobody remembers the 20th anniversary. Do you remember it? It was a beautiful affair. The governor from Ohio came down.

LS: I remember the tent.

EH: Right, right. Did you ever work very much with Dr. Mulholland? Was he a briar ...?

LS: Was he a what?

EH: Was he a briar in your skin?

LS: No, I got along quite well with him. You know.

EH: He and I were just like that. And I think it’s because we had trodden a lot of the same territory in Arkansas and Oklahoma and whatever.

LS: That sign, does that mean you were close?

EH: No.

LS: Okay, we don’t need to go there. (Laughs)

EH: (Laughing) There was something about me, obviously, that turned him off. And I think it probably had to do with the leadership kind of thing and you know, I don’t make any bones about it, if I’m asked to do a job, I’ll stay ‘til midnight. I was up here many a night, over in the Wing, ‘til midnight. Computers were just, can you believe that? Were just now coming in, in the 60s. Now, I may have that date wrong. But they weren’t, not

everybody had a computer, and certainly not everybody had a cell phone that would take pictures.

LS: Uh huh.

EH: Or would do little texts, you know?

LS: We didn't have email then.

EH: We didn't. That's true.

LS: So you talked with people.

EH: Well, I had Helen Kayleigh, do you remember her?

LS: Uh huh.

EH: She was a remarkable woman. She protected me just like a mother. People would come in and quiz her, you know? See politics can get very, very, um, difficult, I'll just use that word. And uh, I think it's a lot easier ... see this is what I believe. I believe that you can be very discreet and yet not be deceitful, or uh, highly political in a negative way. You could always not tell the full truth. That would be Emily Dickinson, wouldn't it? "Tell it slant?"

LS: Well, you brought us up now, pretty much, to the present. What is your impression now of Wright State?

EH: I think it's grown enormously. I uh, I think we have a very capable president now who seems to be very capable. I don't know much about the profits, but it seems, you don't hear all of this, the struggle as you call it. We had to struggle a lot those first years, to come to an understanding. And uh, I think it's part, absolutely necessary to go through that. I don't hear when I come to the campus, when I'm here anytime, I don't hear anything about that.

LS: Okay, give me one word that would describe Wright State now, in your perception.

EH: Um, this is not the best word, but "forward-looking" I think, would describe it.

LS: Forward-looking?

EH: Forward-looking.

LS: Well, that's great. Okay, is there anything special now you would like to add to your interview? Something you haven't mentioned?

EH: No, I would just like to express my appreciation for the pleasure that I've had, pleasure and pain. And the growth that I feel that I went through. And I've also seen in my [indistinct] it's quite a different place now, quite a different place. And I'd kinda like to get more involved now, to see what really is going on, but um, I do think probably our current president is probably one of the best, that we've had.

LS: Did you perceive that the university is successful at this point?

EH: I do think it's successful, I do.

LS: Well, I appreciate your remembrances, your candor and your humor.

EH: Thank you very much, I'm glad you had me here, thank you.