

WRIGHT STATE UNIVERSITY
HST 7700: Research in Local History
Student Oral History Interviews, October 25, 2017
Interview with Matthew Mercer

Interview Information

Interview date: October 25, 2017

Interviewer: Krista Dunkman (KD)

Interviewee: Matthew Mercer (MM)

Interview Transcript

Krista Dunkman (KD): I am Krista Dunkman, and I am here for History 7700. I am...it is the 25th of October, 2017, and we are here in the back room of the Archives in Dunbar Library at Wright State University. So, if you could just state your name, your major, your year.

Matthew Mercer (MM): My name is Matthew Mercer. It's my first year of the Public History master's program. This is my third year here at Wright State.

KD: Was your other years here your undergrad?

MM: Yeah, I was only here for two years.

KD: Okay, what was your major?

MM: It was just history, so liberal arts, with a minor in history. I think that's what the official title is, but I'm not really positive. [both laugh] It's on the degree, on the wall.

KD: Okay, and why did you choose Wright State?

MM: Um, financial reasons. It's cheap. It's close by. I live in Dayton, so...

KD: And what made you want to go into museum work?

MM: Museum work? Um, I've just had a lot of fun with museums over the years. I work out at a Boy Scout ranch in New Mexico, and I've recently been in the museum program out there, so I've had a lot of first-hand experience.

KD: And what's your typical day here at Wright State like?

MM: Um, it really depends on what I'm doing at the time. If I have a project due that day, I'll usually get here around 12 or 1 o'clock. But if I don't have anything due, I don't really get here until 4:00 or 4:30, right before class. And then if I have stuff to do the next day, I might stay at the library after that.

KD: And what was your first day of classes like?

MM: For my master's? Or...?

KD: For both? Let's go with that.

MM: Both? [exhales] First day of undergrad, man, uh, so, I was living over at the Province, and I walked over here. I just had my headphones on the whole time, and then just kind of sat in the back and avoided everybody and just kind of tried to lay low. And that was, that was all right. Uh, the class was whatever. It was like an anthropology class, and I wasn't too into it. But my other class was with Dr. Swanson, and that's one of the reasons that I switched over from International Business to History. For the Public History classes, the first day of classes was fun. I mean, then, once we found out that, like, everyone in the class was also in all your other classes, that was really cool, too. So you really got to make a lot of fun relationships, which was nice.

KD: Those connections will last.

MM: Yeah.

KD: Okay, what's your favorite thing about Wright State?

MM: Ooh. [exhales] Well, I'm a big Pokémon Go fan, so there's a lot of Pokéstops around here. [both laugh] It's not the coolest thing in the world, but you know, it's fine. But, uh, I don't know, it's just a really tight-knit community that you don't really see on bigger campuses where there's a ton of students. Everyone just kind of keeps their head down and walks around. I mean, you get that same kind of thing here, but you definitely have a more, like, just because there's less people, you'll see more people more times than not, so...

KD: And what do you want to do after you graduate?

MM: I really want to work for the National Parks.

KD: Cool.

MM: That would be my top choice. I would also like to work full-time at the camp I work at in New Mexico. So it's either, work there, in Oregon, Washington, or Alaska.

KD: So one of the big National Parks?

MM: Yeah. Alaska would be awesome because that, you're kind of away from a lot of people. I mean, I like people and all, but I also like open spaces.

KD: Yeah. And do you think you want to do more ranger work or exhibit stuff?

MM: I don't think there's really a choice. Like, if you work for the National Parks, you're definitely going to be a ranger. I do like the whole community interactions, so like, being a ranger would be fun, but I'd also want to do like the historical interpretation as well.

KD: And how do you think that your classes here at Wright State will help you get there?

MM: Well, like the museums, the museum classes definitely help out with that. I mean, the archives, I'm not a big archives person, but I mean, what we learn in our classes,

it's just kind of one of those things you just kind of have to add in there. And then, just like the Public History class itself kind of gives a nice overview of everything.

KD: What has been your favorite class?

MM: Oooh, that's a hard tie. It was either...

KD: You can do both.

MM: It was either... There was a Civil War overview, because at the time, like, I knew some stuff about the Civil War, but I didn't really know a lot, so it was really nice to take that class and learn more about it. And then also, Environmental History. That was a lot of fun, too.

KD: Who's been your favorite professor?

MM: Oh, that's a hard three-way tie between Dr. Swanson, Dr. Oldstone-Moore, and Dr. Lockhart.

KD: And what's your least favorite thing about Wright State?

MM: Ooh, I would say, just the overall perception that people who don't really go here always have. Because you tell people you go to Wright State, and they're like, "Aw, (W)right State, wrong university, ha ha ha," like it's hilarious. It's not that funny. And then, just recently, with the whole financial crisis, you kind of have the burden of, "Well, will we be open in like three years down the line?" So it's kind of hard to plan for the future if you don't really know if your school's going to make it. So you just get made fun of a lot, I would say, by coming here. But, I mean, I'm not \$80,000 in debt, with a useless degree, so...

KD: That is true. All right, and what did you do this morning?

MM: Ooh. [exhales] Woke up. Took my dog for a walk. Went to the gym. And then, uh, started working on homework after that.

KD: What kind of dog do you have?

MM: I have a black Lab, like, mutt mix. She's like part Greyhound, part Chow, all kinds of stuff. We got her from a pound. She's cool, though.

KD: What's her name?

MM: Her name's Allie.

KD: Aww.

MM: She's pretty dope.

KD: [laughs] And what'd you eat for breakfast?

MM: I actually don't usually eat breakfast. I'm one of those weird people. Like, I'll get up, and it's like pulling teeth trying to make breakfast. If I do, it's going to be a big, like, buffet. And then it's only me...and my dog. So, I mean, it's not really, like, plausible to do, or right to do, so...

KD: So, what'd you have for lunch?

MM: Lunch? Oh, I went to Five Guys because I haven't been to Five Guys in a while, and the fact that they fill the bag completely full of fries? Och, game changer.

KD: Okay, well, thank you very much.

MM: No problem.