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REMINISCENCES

OF

N. YOST OSBORNE

Osborne, Newell Yost

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This interview is being conducted on November 17, 1978.

Interview by
George W. S. Hays
November 17, 1978

at Mr. Osborne's office, Mount Union College Library.
The interviewer is George W. S. Hays, Head of the Adult Department of the Rodman Public Library in Alliance, Ohio.

Now Mr. Osborne, would you tell me a little bit about your personal background, like where you were from? And what influenced you to come to Mount Union.

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Prepared by the Rodman Public Library
for the Oral History Project, Alliance, Ohio.

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RODMAN PUBLIC LIBRARY

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Now Mr. Osborne, would you tell me a little bit about your personal background, like where you were from? And what influenced you to come to Mount Union.

OSBORNE: All right. Well, actually, I come from not very far away, about sixty miles south of here in the hill part of eastern Ohio in Harrison County, a little place called Jewett, where it was originally Fairview because of the very fine view around. When the railroad went through and after the Civil War the Vice President's name was Mr. Jewett, so

in appreciation it became Jewett. I suppose that's about its only claim to fame, just a little community. I came to college here and I suppose, largely during the Depression years, because I got a scholarship for one thing. And I think secondly, my mother had gone here at the turn of the century and my father had gone to Scio College, which was merged with Mount Union in 1911. That also was a small Methodist College. So I had heard, and was aware of Mount Union for many, many years. I came here and graduated, went on and taught some high school, went on to Pitt in history and started on a Doctrate there. Unfortunately, we were just coming out of the Depression, I wasn't able to go on. The Chairman of the History Department there, Dr. Oliver, informed me that he had a fine opportunity, a three year scholarship to Western Reserve in History. At that time Reserve, as it still is, was very fine in Graduate History. I was quite pleased until I learned the terms of the financial aid which was \$100 a year. Even in Depression times that just didn't cut it. He informed me of this and he said but it's the honor, you will have to scrape up the additional. Well, I just couldn't do that. I was thinking about going back into high school teaching, in fact, I had an opportunity up along the lake by Ashtabula. I was going up to check with them and I got a phone call. I always thought it was like the providential ram in the briars with Abraham and Isaac in the Old Testament. Mr. Stauffer, who at that time was the Librarian here and Professor of Classics, called and said he wanted me to stop by. I had worked very closely with him when I was in college here.

He indicated that he was interested in someone to be his successor. He wondered if I would be interested, and if I would think of going on to library work. It was sort of the proverbial out of the blue. I thought about it, and in the meantime I had also wanted to get married, so I knew I couldn't do three years, but one year I mortgaged myself, got married and went to Western Reserve and the next year came down here which was 1940. So after an absence of four years, I graduated in 1936, I came back in 1940 and I've been here ever since. Time out for a little war experience.

HAYS: What was the College like when you first came here as a student? What were the students like?

OSBORNE: You mean in 1932, not when I first came.... Well, I came from a small town, and to me this was a giant step. I really thought that it was quite an opportunity. I enjoyed it very much. As I look back now, the College was provincial, it was a throw back to the generation or even the generation beyond that earlier. The leadership primarily was composed of individuals who had deep roots in Mount Union and it was homogeneous rather than heterogeneous. I think there were many things to be said on either side. I'm glad I had that experience that way. It was a very fine experience and the group of faculty, a small group, but many of them had been here since the early 20's, worked together well. I think you caught a spirit that you wouldn't maybe on a larger campus, where you had a more sophisticated faculty. The students, this was during the Depression, so there was scarcely a car on campus. Anyone that had a car was supposed to be a million-

aire. There were just very, very few. Parking was certainly no problem. Most of the students were poor, middle, lower middle class income bracket.

HAYS: How large was the school at that time?

OSBORNE: The school was roughly 500 at that time. So in a sense, when I came back in 1936, I came back to an institution that really hadn't changed too much in the time I had been gone. There were a few new faculty, but many of the faculty under whom I had had classes, I worked with as colleagues.

HAYS: What was the curriculum of the College like forty years ago?

OSBORNE: It was geared a little more to strictly liberal arts than it is at present, although teacher preparation was certainly a big part of it. The great professionals, the law, medicine, and there were more going into the ministry, pre-ministerial. I think the year I came Latin and Greek for the first time were not a requirement. Up to that time, every college student had to take so much regardless of what he had in high school; it was still a requirement to take a year or two, more in college of both offered. The year that I came that was relaxed. I often regretted it in some respects that I didn't go on, that I didn't continue at least in the Greek, I'd had some Latin.

HAYS: What was the relationship between the College and the community? Was it friendly?

OSBORNE: I suppose you have to base this on what it's like currently or what it was earlier, but I think it's a much

better relationship today. At that time there were misgivings in the community because of certain events which happened years earlier and which carried over. It was nothing really to do with the community. It was just simply that the President of the College, at that time the President of the College was O.N. Hartshorn, intended to do well, but he used the endowment of the College to speculate in a fashion, not to his own personal advantage, but for the advantage of the College, and lost it all in a very celebrated law suit. And as a result, because of some Depression periods that followed, the College almost folded. It just almost went out of existence. In 1911, at the time Scio was merged, for people outside this area and conference, in the Northeast Ohio Conference, there was a speculation whether Mount Union was going to Scio or vice versa. It was just through the coming of a young energetic President like McMaster and the combination Carnegie Pledge that it stayed here. But the aftermath of that was in the community. And then I think after World War I, Memorial Hall was built, and there was a misapprehension in the community. The College raised funds to build it, but many people in the community maybe will only give a dollar or fifty cents and there were many, many gifts like that. They felt somehow that they had a vested interest in that place and if they wanted to hold a wedding reception or a dance it should be available. But what they didn't understand was that although it could be used for certain large convocation purposes, it wasn't a personal, social hall in a sense that many lodge halls are. So I think it was a com-

ination of those items that led to an estrangement of town and gown. I think that was one of the very skillful accomplishments on the part of President Ketcham. He was able to rekindle this spirit that once existed. We have a much better relationship now.

HAYS: Was there any social life back in the 30's for the students or was all time spent in studying?

OSBORNE: Frankly, college students are always college students. But I have been on the scene here for a great many years. I think probably more time was spent in studying. The thing that I notice most lacking is reading. I think students did more reading in those days. Maybe students today study as much, but they don't read as much. There certainly weren't the outlets and that was a cry in those days. I think many times students tended to provide their own amusement. They got up and they did their own thing so to speak, which was not necessarily a beer bash or something of this nature. But I think today, I notice the students that come here have more and more feeling that you have to do something for me, you have to entertain me, you have to provide this as well as the standard curriculum and other outlets. I think fraternities and sororities were more powerful in those days and more a part of the whole campus life. Individuals who didn't belong were not exactly ostracized, but people who wanted to be more in the swim of things belonged to one of the organizations. And usually on weekends, other times there were opportunities, they afforded it.

all the faculty had to appear during the year for a program.

So this took care of a lot of the social outlets. I think during the week there was a lull of course, but it was just unheard of that students would have parties or anything scheduled. That was just taboo, period, which of course, does not exist today.

HAYS: Not like the present Tuesday night.

OSBORNE: No. You know some students indicate they just get recovered from the weekend and then it's Tuesday and Wednesday and time for the weekend again. This is kind of the perennial circle that goes on.

HAYS: You mentioned fraternities. You were in a fraternity weren't you?

OSBORNE: Yes, I belonged to Alpha Tau Omega when I was on campus. At that time there were five fraternities on campus. Some pretty wholesome competition among them. Fraternities change over the years and recently, I think the emphasis on fraternities has changed. Fraternities and sororities today just do not have the influence that they had at one time.

HAYS: I know when I went to school here the ATO's did not have a very good image. What was it like when you were in them?

OSBORNE: Well, I'll have to admit it was not the greatest of times. I recall the Dean of Women at that time, who was a very subtle sort of individual. A real scholar, she taught history here too. She used to appear in Chapel occasionally; all the faculty had to appear during the year for a program,

maybe oftener. Chapel was every morning in those days, five times a week. And I recall so well Dean Stevenson getting up and saying ladies and gentlemen, then she'd pause and she'd say and ATO's. So there was I think somewhat of a proper stigma. Although I don't think they were regarded quite as the animals or barbarians as they are today. We certainly had some individuals who did their own thing, but there were others who compensated for that. As I said, fraternities change over the years.

HAYS: That's interesting. Let's jump ahead now to today, and see in your opinion what is the academic life like now? Is it more complex or more rigorous or is it too relaxed? How's it changed in forty years?

OSBORNE: We just had a debate. We had a specially called faculty meeting this morning considering what kind of calendar the College would adopt. We presently are on a three term. The proposal was to continue that or drop that and take up an early semester, which would be a two semester school year. There were very strong feelings expressed for each side. I think it was a foregone conclusion that the majority of the students, the proponderance of the students, favored the three term and that by about the same percentage faculty also. Although even the adherers of the three term, current, admitted there would have to be some investigation after the vote, regardless. If it were continuation of three term, there would have to be some investigation of what could be done to improve the academic excellence. There was a feeling that the Wednesday problem is one. The weekend exodus is

another. And in this sense I'd have to point out that, being College historian I am more aware; as was Dean Bowman, who is the great venerated Dean of the institution from World War I through the 30's, in the 1920's in an annual report, in fact two or three annual reports, pointed out one of the main problems with the College was the academic excellence, number two was the suitcase college he called it. Students went away on Friday afternoon at 3:00 and didn't get in 'till Monday morning for 7:30 class. He felt that this mitigated against the sort of collegiality that he would like to have on campus, this spirit. I think in view of what Harvard has done to try to have a core curriculum or, in other words, a body of knowledge that all students must possess or be aware of regardless of your major, I think we'll probably move more toward that. There was talk of curriculum revision. As I indicated earlier, I think somehow more emphasis upon a reading background, so if one majors in Biology, at least he's aware of Chaucer and Milton and Spencer, more than just names; and vice versa. How to do this, I've talked to many students. They admit if there were a requirement for graduation, that they had to read so many books, had to indicate some competence in this background, they'd read it. Otherwise they would just bypass this. I think if we are going to have a liberal of arts education, it's got to be truly liberating, then you must have some cross the board education. You can't just be a narrow specialist.

HAYS: Do the students not take the course work as seriously

as they used to?

OSBORNE: I think many of our students do. I think we have a very fine group of students. But I think that the reason they come here is to have their sights elevated and through liberal arts you try to liberate them from thinking that five minutes of television a night is going to give them all of the news that's happening in the world that day. We just have to do more at this point, that's all. I've felt for a long time that many of our graduates who go out are very finely prepared in their own subject major field, but they have to compete with students in other particular businesses or professions that they are in, who not only excel in that, but who have this background. And this separates the sheep from the goats in a hurry. Some of our students you know, play catch up then. You have to read, you have to discover that Picasso was a painter or Bach was a great composer. All the other variations like that which many of our students just don't take seriously. They're just not forced to. But I think somewhere we have to insist upon this type of competence.

HAYS: That's the best reason that I've heard for a liberal arts college ever. And it makes a lot of sense. What was the Library like? Where was the Library and what was it composed of when you first came? How had it developed up to the point when you came?

OSBORNE: The Library was over in Chapman Hall. It occupied, I believe, with the exception of the classroom right at the rear here, the northeast corner, except that classroom, the

Library at that time had taken over all of the first floor of Chapman Hall. The reading room was across the west side, offices were across there on the east. In the basement, what we could utilize of it, was our large stack area. There were about 2,000 or 3,000 volumes in the reading room upstairs and some bound magazines in a little ante room and everything else was downstairs, bound volumes, government documents and the book collection. Mr. Stauffer was the Librarian, he had been the Librarian since 1920, and I might interject parenthetically, that I think it is unique in an institution like this for a period of say from 1920 to 1978 which is fifty-eight years, to have only two Librarians. This is unique. I can say that it has great virtue because you have continuity of a policy. The policies were good. On the other hand I can see it can be disastrous too, maybe if you have more people in you have greater input. I must make that observation. But the Library was in Chapman Hall and it was recognized that the quarters were inadequate. Chapman Hall had an old boiler system and every time they put in a little coal, I went down with a couple of students with a sweeper and broom and swept up all the coal dust, it just filtered through. The buffer between the boiler room and the coal cellar there, and the rest of the collection was the government documents, because they were considered expendable, and then the rest of the collection, with the bound volumes and then the regular books. But it was just impossible. Mr. Stauffer of course deserves a great, great vote of thanks for what he put up with and what he tried to do under the circumstances. Other institutions had a

library by the time they were founded. And I think here there was one; it didn't amount to much. The Literary Societies from 1850 to 1900 occupied as much position politically on the campus that fraternities and sororities then later did for about fifty years. They each had a library the students would use. If you belonged to the Linnaean, you used that one, if you belonged to the Republican, if your library didn't contain a volume, you got a friend from the other library. There was no selection, there was just pretty much what some minister or what somebody would give them. They had a lot of anti-slavery propaganda and a lot of anti-Mormon propaganda and the great works of authors as someone would present them. They had no money to buy with, the libraries were open a half hour in an afternoon, that was it. When President Marsh came in 1889, he was a breath of air from the outside. It's now like Pope John, he opened the windows. He decided we must have a library. The Literary Societies were on their last legs and he got them to merge, put their libraries together, and that started the College Library. But although we had it in name, in fact they didn't have the money to buy works, \$200 to \$300 a year to buy materials, that's all they had for many years. I did know when Mr. Stauffer came in 1920, he threw two thirds of the Library out, it just didn't amount to anything. So in effect, the Library almost dates from 1920 when he came. He was a fine scholar, he was a classicist, he taught literature here, very discriminating, very insistent upon standards. I had classes under him and worked in

the Library for him when I was here. I hope I've tried to carry out that kind of policy as far as selection for the Library is concerned. After the War, when Dr. King was Chairman of the Board of Trustees and with Dr. Ketcham, it sort of swung around the whole concept of support for the institution here. This is what Alliance did, Alliance and Sebring, this area. They provided funds for this Library that we presently have. And that was a tremendous step forward to move into this. As I said, we started moving from the Victorian era to the twentieth century just over night.

HAYS: When was the present building built?

OSBORNE: We moved in here the fall of 1950. We started in 1949 and moved in here in 1950. Actually, we gave a day off, an afternoon off, one time in October 1950, when we had plotted this, planned it all out ahead of time. We had sort of a human conveyor or student conveyor belt. We had a tub of doughnuts and kegs of cider out where that buckeye tree is in the circle there, had that around, and it was a beautiful afternoon. We had students, our student assistants, well, much like you were when we did the renovation. It was this type of thing. We had a lot of fine student assistants and we just plagued the students. They started over there with an arm load of books and came over here where someone told them where to put them. We moved I suppose sixty to seventy thousand volumes that afternoon, which is a good days work.

HAYS: What was the, I don't know if this is going to make any sense, the major type of service that the Library provided, when you first came here to work? Has it changed over forty years?

OSBORNE: I suppose we just have more reference or more background facilities that we offer. We do much more in the way of interlibrary loan than we did in those years. We did practically zero interlibrary loan in those years. We do much, much more now. Collection wise we couldn't do quite so much for the student as we do now. We have much more in the way of resources. I think the second thing is, facility wise, you'd have to see some way, you can imagine going over to Memorial Hall and what that's like. That's rather stark. But if you just put some long tables and some rough chairs on the floor down there, this is what the Library was like. It was just wooden tables and wooden chairs, rather bare. Chapman Hall before it was renovated was rather dark and gloomy and the hours when I first came were 8:30 to 5:00 and then we closed. We were open two night a week from 6:30 to 8:00, Tuesday and Thursday night. And that's all. No weekends. I think Saturday noon, we were open until 12:00 Saturday, then we closed until Monday morning. So we were closed weekends. And just an hour and a half two evenings a week. We've amplified that, we're not only open weekends, we're open until 11:00 Monday through Thursday, well Sunday through Thursday and Friday until 9:00 and until 5:00 on Saturday. So the number of hours has more than doubled.

HAYS: So access to service has increased a good deal.

OSBORNE: Much, much better.

HAYS: You had mentioned that the book budget one time was only about two to three hundred dollars.

OSBORNE: That would be the turn of the century and up through World War I. We spend about fifty thousand dollars for books now. And we spend over thirty thousand for periodicals. When I came, periodicals were maybe three thousand. That was all we spent. We spend thirty seven hundred dollars for Chem Abstracts alone right now. We spend more for that than we had for the whole periodical budget in 1940, which is inflation, and of course, the great expansion, the break through in the sciences in the knowledge explosion.

HAYS: Just the tremendous cost in books themselves.

OSBORNE: Right. That's right.

HAYS: Last year the average cost for a book was eighteen dollars and something.

OSBORNE: Yes. Well, I used to feel that for a novel I would not want to pay more than two and a half or three dollars. Now you're thinking in terms of ten dollar minimum almost, and more than that, twelve-fifty, fifteen dollars for a novel.

HAYS: For the good ones.

OSBORNE: Well, even for the bad ones as far as that is concerned.

HAYS: How big was the staff of the Library when you first started here?

OSBORNE: Well, let's see, there was Mr. Stauffer who was the Librarian, but he taught Classics also, which meant that he had a couple of classes in Greek, he taught a class in Bibliography. We had two, he taught one and I taught one.

HAYS: You mentioned the teaching of the Bibliography class;

We had a cataloger, Mrs. Engle and we had a lady who worked, Lilla Patterson. That was the staff. I think the second year that I was here, Miss Patterson, who was up in years, decided to go to Florida. Then as they do now, you know, you just double in brass, she went so I just did everything that she did in addition to what I was doing for the three or four months that she was gone.

HAYS: What was your title here, what were your duties when you first came?

OSBORNE: When I first came it was really a little bit of everything; and that's what intrigued me about coming here, and secondly, about staying on because you do a little bit of everything. I remember I had charge of the Government Documents. We're a depository, a selective depository. Mr. Stauffer took me to one of the office rooms of Chapman Hall and he said there are some documents in here that you should catch up on. He opened the door and it was just like a flood. I don't know whether you know Fibber's clothes press or not, but this is what it would remind you of. Just box after box of documents that had never been opened even. That was one of my duties; it took me a year and a half to catch up with that. Then it was mainly just operating the desk, reference work, circulation. I taught a class. We were on semesters at that time and Elementary Bibliography was required, so I had two sections which meant about forty or fifty students a semester. It was just general assistance, anything that needed to be done.

HAYS: You mentioned the teaching of the Bibliography class;

you've done that almost every year since you've been here.

OSBORNE: Yes I have. We offer it just fall and winter term now and to a very, very selective few; in fact I have two students this term and I'll have two students who have signed up for the next term, the winter term. It does whittle out if you have just a few; at least they're very interested, motivated students. I used to have as I say, twenty or more in a section, but I have in virtue of that, been a member of the faculty. I think whether I had taught or not, probably I would have had the courtesy of being considered a member of the faculty and going to faculty meetings. This does not apply to the rest of the staff. But it does to me, and mostly to the fact that I have taught.

HAYS: Have you taught anything else here besides the Bibliography type course?

OSBORNE: Yes, during the War years, we got into an enrollment problem with young men being drafted, and there were a few women, but preponderantly it was the men who were taken.

I taught some Composition English courses for two years. When the Air Force was here with the cadet program I taught, in fact I taught full time in that. And then over the years, not so much recently because Dr. Chapman has been able, I think, to work it out much better. I remember we had an individual who had some problems; the term would start and he would have to be off. He had a drinking problem and I helped out a couple of times with that. We had a couple of other young instructors in English and the same thing happened.

a rare book collection as we do here so I utilize that. I

They had emotional problems or physical health problems and I helped out in that. In history, Dr. Saffell and I offered an Oral History Program about five or six summers ago. We started, but we just had one taker during the summer. It was not offered during the regular year. We had thought perhaps this might be a very interesting course for some students to persue something about the industrial background of Alliance and in connection with a seminar in History or culminating experience for a senior, or do the pottery business in East Liverpool, which is nearby.

HAYS: I know a number of your students who have taken your courses have gone into library work, myself included. What do you try to teach them in this probably their very first introduction into library work?

OSBORNE: We call the course Elementary Bibliography and over the years, since we've moved into this building, the last twenty-five years or so, I thought I would make it a combination course, two thirds of it a basic survey of reference works in the Library so that a student could go anywhere and be equipped to do some basic reserarch, elementary to start off with. Secondly, a part of the course, a third of the course, may be in book selection. Just being able in another course, when a reading assignment is offered, to pick out the best book, or for a personal library, to pick out those books which will enhance the personal library. Then there is another factor and I think it comes under the appreciation of books and we're fortunate in having a rare book collection as we do here so I utilize that. I

try to expose students to old manuscripts, old rare books and current items that are typographically outstanding so that they have a little appreciation from an aesthetic or art approach of what the book can be. I try to put all that together, really it's a half course. As you know, when you took it, you can elect for a full course, in that case, the student does a special project. Usually something in bibliography or cataloging a special part of the collection, something of that sort. Michelle Popa just finished a year ago, and did a survey of items in the Alliance Room, an annotated bibliography. You did one on Canada. We try to make it something that will be rather practical.

HAYS: I'm glad you mentioned the Rare Book Room. It wouldn't be fair to interview you at all without mentioning that. That's been one of your biggest joys hasn't it?

OSBORNE: I've enjoyed that and like Bishop Henderson, reminded Charles Ketcham one day at a convocation, he said, "Charles, it takes money to make the mare run." And anyone who comes from the country knows what that meant. I have to interject here, I had a secretary, not my present, three or four years ago when I was writing to an alumnus. I was recalling this and I said that it takes money to make the mare run. My secretary, not being from the country, spelled it mayor. So I just let it go because it takes money to make mayors run in the cities today too. No it takes money to do that. We had the nucleus for the collection of a classics collection, the Sutherin Classical Collection. But Mr. Shilts really gave hundreds of thousands of dollars and we

were able to buy at a time when the rare book market, when you could buy books for reasonable prices. Today you just wouldn't be able to touch many of those items that have appreciated from the \$35 to \$40 I spent to maybe \$200 a piece today, they have gone up like that. But I feel that for this type of institution we have a fine collection of rare books illustrating what we call calligraphy and typography; what man has excelled in and history of writing and printing. We have some very fine examples to illustrate that. My only lament is that we have no angels to continue that. When the College is in a campaign strength in the 80's, and wants to match the Timken grant, you can't go up to people and twist their arm further for this. It has to be someone special who has an interest and who said if I can't give you this, then I'll give it to Harvard or Walsh or someplace else. So that we're almost forced. In fact this is what Mr. Shilts indicated, if we didn't take the money and use it for that, he would simply have given it to Western Reserve Academy, as you know he did there, and to a couple of other places in which he was interested.

HYAS: I forgot to find out before hand, when did you actually become Director of the College Library?

OSBORNE: I came here in 1940, had about three years out for the service, and served as Assistant or Associate Librarian until 1955. I became Director of the Library when Mr. Stauffer retired at that time. So since 1955, I've been Director.

HAYS: Now there are more than the main Library on this campus, right?

OSBORNE: We do have two branches. We have a library at Cope Music Hall and we do have a library at Wilson Hall, the Science Library. This poses many problems and I don't know any place that can resolve them, even a place like Ohio State that has more volumes in a science library, more stacks there than we have here, because there's always an overlap of the volume someone wants in the main Library is at the branch. But basically, the rule of thumb that we go by, something on composition, harmony, examples of Bach's sonatas, which we just received, will go down to Cope. A life of Bach or Beethoven will remain here because we assume many other students will be interested in that. In harmony or counterpoint, that should go to Cope, and the same thing with the Wilson Science Library. The more technical and laboratory manuals should go down there. But something on the whole origin of the universe will stay here. Something explaining quantum mechanics with a highly mathematical involvement will go down to Wilson Hall.

HAYS: Now this building has been expanded in the last few years.

OSBORNE: Yes, in 1974 we looked ahead to do something about it. In 1975 we dedicated an addition and the rest of the building was renovated. You were through a part of that and contributed to that, so you know what was involved. It's bad enough to build a library across campus and to move a collection, but to renovate a building and try to keep a collection going at one part while you're building or renovating another part is really something. It's the type of

project where you're glad to look back upon and not ahead to anticipate. But thanks to you, Mark Haidet, John Case, and a group of fellows like that, we had a good group to move the books and to do this. We just couldn't have accomplished it without them. It's worth putting up with because it enhanced the main Library. The addition has been something that we needed, the decor, the decoration, the air conditioning. I think the students have received this quite well, instead of the two old study rooms that we had, we spread students out now. At least to date, all comments that I have had have been favorable. They seem to appreciate it.

HAYS: I heard people from the community say that it's remarkable that the addition blends in so well.

OSBORNE: Yes, this is one thing. I think that's credit to the architects in that they were able to do that so you don't have this as something that's added on.

HAYS: Has student use increased because the Library is a much warmer atmosphere now?

OSBORNE: No, I don't think, not a tremendous jump. We'll have to wait until this fall. We notice we have more students using the Library than say a year ago. I don't know how this will be reflected. Seemingly, this group of freshmen are a little more serious and a little more studious, it's rubbed off on, well we had a nucleus of upperclassmen. We've had more students that have used the Library this fall than we have for a long, long time.

HAYS: That's a confident sign isn't it?

OSBORNE: In fact, until I went to the war, World War II, the end of the 30's there, I think circulation wise, for what those figures mean, we did more business, we had more books circulated per student, three times as many as we have currently. I remember Charles Ketcham, who was President, and he used to tell me, "You wait 'till you get that new facility, you're just practically going to have to lock the doors to keep students out, you're going to be so full." Well it didn't turn out. We did have a number. Of course, once they got the student center that dropped off, because many students were using this as sort of a quasi-meeting place, socializing spot. I think Mr. Stauffer was disappointed when he first came here about the student use of the Library. I have over the years felt with the facilities we have, we have never had students use that, as the term you shouldn't use, they have never maximized it. That's a good educational term. They never made as full use as they could or should. How you get at that, and that's tied up with the whole reading bit. We ought to have more. Just an aside, when I first came here, I used to have practically two dozen students who would come in once a week or once every two weeks to talk about their reading. They were reading current, the best seller type. And they would say now this is an investment in time and I don't want to read a potboiler, what do you recommend that really is a good non-fiction or a work of fiction. Then they would want to talk about it afterwards. Because it's no good to read something

if you can't sort of give and take, share on it. Then I went in the service, and when I came back, that just didn't pick up and.... It's not done that since. Once in a while one student. It seemed to me that was sort of a golden period as far as use of the Library and reading were concerned.

HAYS: We have basically the same problem in the public library.

OSBORNE: Right.

HAYS: I was just talking with a librarian this morning and she laments the fact that she can't find anybody to talk to. Nobody's reading and....

OSBORNE: Yes.

HAYS: She's greatly disappointed.

OSBORNE: You find this on campus where the student who is serious and wants to read, almost tends to hide the fact for fear that he will not exactly be ostracized, but it's just not the in thing to do. Some of the students said they wished they had someone they could share, talk over this book with.

HAYS: Well, it would be nice to see the students use this facility more. I remember when I was working here at the desk, a senior came in who had never been in the Library before. He was in his second or last term and he was being forced to do a paper. He had never set foot in this building. It just amazed me how you could go through college and never use the Library.

OSBORNE: Well, it still happens. And for that matter, we have faculty people, who if they had to give an affidavit when they had last been in the Library, and could collect money, they wouldn't collect very much. There are some who just don't use it very much. But whatever comfort it is, this is true on many other campuses, it isn't just true here. Some have a little better success and this is what we hope for, that we can join that group. That we would have just a little better success student and faculty wise. But on the other hand, we do have some very loyal supporters, someone like Dr. Chapman and Dr. Saffell, Dr. Rodman, people like Dr. Phelps, very fine supporters and users of this Library.

HAYS: Well, the national swing seems to be getting back to more basic curriculum.

OSBORNE: Yes, I hope this will be reflected. I certainly do.

HAYS: What do you see as the role of any college librarian on a college campus?

OSBORNE: I think the function of the Library is to support the curriculum of the teaching, that is, whatever research might be going on. We try to do that, we try to get periodicals that are going to back up the teaching plus the books. And of course, no institution can provide all this background, you have to depend on others. Even Ohio State has to inter-library loan from Penn State or someplace else. So we try to do that.

I presume in the very near future there will be more of a computerized emphasis and aspect to the libraries. I guess I'm old fashioned, I take a very jaundiced view of that. I can't see that really solves problems. Basically a student still has to read and assimilate to be able to write. No matter if you can punch a button and find all of this, still a student has to do something with it. If we have three fine definitive texts or books here in the ten weeks term, this is about all a competent student can do; to use three good texts like that to write a paper. If you have three hundred, what do you do with three hundred. You just don't have time. Most students don't have the background to weigh these books to look through. So I think the computer for large universities where they're doing highly specialized research, maybe for seniors who are doing some sort of special project here, this might be of some advantage. It's still this basic type of instruction that students are doing. Once they get this, then they can go to the university and utilize that.

HAYS: Now I know you do most of the selection of the materials for this Library. Isn't it imperative that you've got to have outside advice from the faculty?

OSBORNE: Well some faculty. I've mentioned some individuals, some faculty are very good. They assist in this. I do send a great deal around to faculty for advice. For science people because I can't make a judgment and it becomes very technical. In fields of English, History, and Psychology, I can hazard a guess. You become acquainted with authorities

in these areas. You have to have that. Mr. Stauffer tended to do that and I followed along in that pattern. What someone else would do I don't know. Whether he could get more faculty involvement. The Dean and I have talked about it, I don't know, frankly, how you do this with some people. This is a problem. But you're right, it is a real problem and you need more faculty involvement. In fact, I devised a little experiment, a project. We were going to try to get funding on it, just to accomplish this very thing. But two thirds of the faculty turned us down. I don't know for what reason, but this was, it seemed to me an indication. What we were trying to do was to have faculty examine the collection as it pertained to their particular area. Define what was antiquated, out of date, what we needed, then we were going to draw up a proposal to foundations to try to fund this. Well, it was a matter of mechanics you see, surveying this, finding what we're weak in, what we can do without, putting down those things that we need. Some felt they were too busy. I proposed they take a senior student, and instead of a culminating experience, charge this off as a culminating experience. Many of them felt that would not have a senior equipped to do it and one thing and another so we never got off the ground on it.

HAYS: That's too bad.

OSBORNE: But many faculty are interested. Some faculty hold classes in the Library, small upper level classes, in the Library where they can go right to a section and draw out the books and talk about them.

HAYS: Do you invite or welcome people from outside the College to come to the Library to just tour it or use the facilities here?

OSBORNE: I just had a call, in fact it's on that slip. I was out this morning; a call came in from a lady who's doing genealogy; I get five or six of these a week usually. But I explained to her the basic rules, that this a private, it's for the students. We'd be glad to have her and her husband come in and use the facilities, but charging them out is another thing. I become very, very stringent about allowing outsiders to take books out. Of course, as you know we co-operate very much with Rodman and we appreciate this relationship. We like to think that if someone comes in and wants a best seller, a novel, something like that we're not going to get, but that you have to, we can refer that person there. By the same token, if someone down there is interested in who was Shakespeare, and you're limited in that, they can come up here and find resources here that they can use. I think this has been good over the years, the last ten or fifteen years. We've tried to be very co-operative in that respect.

HAYS: That's good for each other and it's good for a community as a whole.

OSBORNE: That's right. I think it's gone down quite well.

HAYS: I don't think I have any more questions. Is there anything more you'd like to add?

OSBORNE: No, I don't think of anything along those lines.

I think that's covered a lot of years and a lot of topics. It's been a very enjoyable experience. I liked the different aspects. I suppose one facet we didn't touch upon was the matter of archives or historical collection. In a sense, I inherited that. When I came here, I remember Herman Carr, the Business Manager, had been interested, (his father was in the second graduating class), and was like a financial agent for the College. Herman was Business Manager for many years. But through this family background I remember there was a cardboard carton and a bushel basket full of pictures and programs and that was the historical collection. We kept them in an old clothes press or little closet over at Chapman Hall. One day I became aware of the fact that a Trustee came in and was helping himself. Someone had written to him and he was coming in and taking out a folder and was going to send it to that person. I checked with Mr. Stauffer about the propriety of that and he said well, I hate to say anything because he's a Trustee. So we devised a system, we locked that and I was put in charge and anyone would have to give me a bad time to get something out of it and I in return would have to say Mr. Stauffer would have to consider it. From that we developed a collection of historical materials, in fact we have a whole area upstairs now which is devoted just to that. But I think this reflects the heritage and background of this institution.

HAYS: Is it all College history or do you have other areas?

OSBORNE: There's three divisions in there; we have items that pertain to the College from the very beginning down to

the current, right to the present. We also have a section called MH, for any alumnus or former student or faculty member who writes a book. We try to put one copy in what we call the Mount Union Historical Collection. And then recently in the last five or ten years, I've developed an O collection. It's local history, it includes all of Ohio with special emphasis on Alliance and Stark County, this area around here. I've tried to buy up all the counties histories for Ohio and many of the others; the Centennial, the Bicentennial rather brought out a lot, a flood of histories, and I've tried to buy as many of those as I could. Hopefully, sometime some student will want to do something, or history will want to do something in local history and we'll have a lot of background material to operate with. But actually, this person this morning called up, and yesterday I had another letter from a person who wanted some information on genealogy in the state of Washington, who wanted some information that I had to Xerox from one of the books in the collection. There's not a week goes by that there's not at least four inquiries that I use that.

HAYS: One thing I almost forgot to mention, you're an author yourself.

OSBORNE: Well in a very minor sense. Through a sort of happenstance, I wrote a history of the College. And I guess that qualifies on that basis.

HAYS: What prompted you to write that?

OSBORNE: Well, I never had given it a thought. Actually it was a day just like today, a rather drizzly sort of a day.

I guess along about this time of year, it was after World War II. I was sitting in a tent over in France putting in time trying to get released, and get back to the States, and I got a letter from the Dean at that time who was Melvin Hyde. He said at the faculty meeting we're looking (and this was 1945), ahead to the summer of 1946, our Centennial Year for the institution. The faculty met and voted that they would like to have you write the history of the College. He said see what you can do about getting out and getting over here to do it. I remember going down to Paris and talking to, getting into the headquarters of a General, and he said son, I've heard every excuse to get out of the Army, but never to write a history to do it. And he said I'll give you credit for trying, but you just go back and sit in your tent until your time comes around. Which is what I did: you accumulate so many points and when that came along the schedule, this is what happened. I came back here and I think I got back in February of 1946 and the Centennial was the big happening of Commencement time in June. Some Trustees felt we ought to do a hurried production. President Ketcham felt if you're only going to do one in one hundred years, we've had no others, let's do a good job and defer it; and that's what we did. It took me two or three years off time to gather the material and start putting it together, in the meantime we built this building, the Library building, and started Rodman Playhouse and Crandall Art Gallery. His feeling was we just wouldn't have the funds to publish it. They were so interested in the promotion, the development of the campus. So I seemed to

put everything up on the top shelf. A number of years later, Dr. Bracy called me over one time in early spring and said we're going to rededicate Chapman Hall in the fall and he said I want to have a history of the College to go along with that. Do you think you can have it done? I said, well, I'll see what I can do. He said that's an order. I recall, I think the first of May I started. I went home in the evening about 6:30 after dinner, 6:30 or 7:00 and I worked usually 'till 1:00 every night; this was Sunday right through Sunday with no time off. I was able to rewrite and do the little bits of added research and came up with the history which was published then.

HAYS: And the title of it is A Select....

OSBORNE: A Select School. This actually was one of the titles that O.N. Hartshorn had. He started off first with a subscription and then he called it a select school, meaning that we selected students rather than just going to a district school, this was a select school and respected. Someone had the notion that this would make a good title for it, a select school. Of course with it we had the history of Scio as well so this made it almost a two in one research. Again, it was one of those things, it's much more pleasant to look back upon than to anticipate because there's an immense amount of time in the research and the writing and the re-writing that goes into it.

HAYS: I've read the book and it's one of the most detailed histories of anything I've ever read. Have you ever thought of publishing an update?

OSBORNE: No, I don't think I want to do a sequel. As you probably know, there are two or three factors in there I'd just as soon not handle. Many people think that would be quite interesting and that would really sell a book too. I think enough time's passed that it wouldn't make a ripple. In the meantime, in doing that, as sort of a spillover, I had hoped to do for the Bicentennial year, but time gets away. But there are about a dozen individuals who either graduated or attended Mount Union in the 19th Century who really are outstanding figures. You talk to even, even the President, the Administration, or the faculty, many of them are not aware of some of these and really how outstanding they are. I've been gathering information, I have folder after folder full. If I get some time to sit down, I think it would be interesting to write up something. I don't know what the title exactly would be, but it's about these individuals who are alumni and the contributions that they made. They range all the way from a woman who's a doctor and was discriminated against in Kansas City and started her own hospital for children, for poor indigent children. She charged them nothing, it was Mercy, Childrens Mercy Hospital in Kansas City. Thomas Henry Tibbles, who was an Indian fighter and rode with John Brown and married an Indian Princess. There were a number of very interesting, one was an artist. There are some missing pieces that I'd like to get a little more to fill it out. I think, again this is limited, it would be primarily for people interested in Mount Union and I suppose in Ohio, some historical libraries around here would like to have it for that reason. It's a little limited.

I do have a number of chapters on early history of Alliance. If I can again, get some break through there, I'd like to write that period from 1850 to 1870 which is a very colorful period. When there was another college downtown in Alliance, when there was the third opera house in the state of Ohio in the city of Alliance, when Sourbeck's Hotel, when Alliance was the crossroads railroad wise and when they had a couple flourishing agricultural implement places here. This is, I think, a very colorful period. I just can't get the pictures, the photographs to go with that and there is some missing.... But one of these times I hope to round that out and maybe retirement wise I can concentrate more on that.

HAYS: Of course most of your retirement will probably be taken up with your well known growing ability with plants.

OSBORNE: Well with inflation. I'll have to. So that in order to eat. I'll enjoy that.

HAYS: Thank you.

OSBORNE: Very good George.

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