

Revised Transcript

Interview with Anna Janney DeArmond
Newark, Delaware
May 9, 1976
Interviewer: Rebecca Button

B--Rebecca Button
D--A. J. DeArmond

B: This is an interview with Anna Janney DeArmond, Professor of English at the University of Delaware, where she taught from 1935 until 1975. The interview is being conducted at Miss DeArmond's home on Manns Avenue in Newark, on May 9, 1976.

Going back to 1935 is a long trip, isn't it?

D: Yes, it is a long trip. Sometimes, however, it seems closer than it actually is because I remember so well what happened in those early years. It was an interesting life. It would horrify a great many people today, particularly young people who are convinced of course that if a woman is not free and independent she can't really enjoy herself. I don't think we thought much about that, and the life we lived was important to me because I had never been so much a part of a community as I was in those first years.

B: Oh, that sounds very interesting. Were you, do you think, perhaps more a part of the community because of your having to live on campus?

D: Yes, I think so. If I had been older--in fact when I was older--I was very glad to get off the campus. But when I came here I was only twenty-five. That seemed terribly old then, and I'm sure I seemed old to my students and young to my fellow teachers. But it was an interesting kind of life, and everybody pulled together. There was an element of harmony, an esprit de corps that I think is lost when you are in a bigger place and when you have a different kind of relationship. I taught the students; I saw them at meals; I saw them in the dormitory, ^{sharing} taking ~~the shower room~~ ^{the shower room} ~~our showers together~~ ^{together}--all the rest of it; and it really was a happy, rather ^{jolly} ~~and~~, pleasant life. There was also far less red tape than there

is today and therefore you did the jobs that were really important. And

you had--at least I had--a considerable amount of leisure.

B: When you say that you did the jobs that were important, you mean in terms of your students, working with...?

D: Yes.

B: The students and teaching.

D: Yes. You taught, and you saw the students in other contexts and advised and helped them. I don't remember that there were such people as counselors; we didn't have psychologists running around or anyone of that sort. So you talked to the students about their personal problems. You came to know them; you frequently met their parents; you knew their boy friends. It was a very pleasant, harmonious relationship, and for a young person it was extremely valuable experience.

B: Do you think we're ever going to be able to have this again?

D: Well, certainly not here, and I doubt whether it's likely to come anywhere, because it is perfectly true that the demands that were made on us were in a sense unreasonable. We really gave our lives to the job--morning, noon, and night, any hour of the day or night. I've had kids call on me at one o'clock in the morning, wake me up because there's some problem. To a certain extent, as you get older at least, you need more privacy than that. But I was doing--this was my first job. I was perfectly willing to give myself entirely to it. And there weren't many distractions; I didn't even own a car until I was thirty-one.

B: How did you happen to come to Delaware?

D: Ha! I graduated from college in '32. It was the lowest year of the depression; practically nobody had a job. I did graduate work on scholarships for three years. Just living from hand to mouth on scholarships, which at that point were really huge if you had seven hundred--or even five hundred dollars. Then at the end of my third year I heard of an opening at the University of Delaware. I knew Delaware only as the place where the Delaware Foreign Study Plan had originated; I'd known that much for years. The position was an instructorship in English. My teachers at Bryn Mawr recommended me for it and it for me. I took the job, and I was so glad to have a job, any job, that I think I would have put up with almost anything. Therefore a good many of the, well, sacrifices that we made in privacy and such weren't very important.

B: But we weren't comparing privacy versus no privacy at that time.

D: Well; in those days a professional woman expected to make certain sacrifices that no woman would be willing to make now if she had any gumption at all.

B: You're beginning to sound like the modern feminist. Did you think of yourself as a feminist then?

D: No, only insofar--I think this is true--as I thought of myself as headed towards and interested in a career. I probably griped at the time about some of the restrictions on my freedom: the fact that I wasn't allowed to smoke-- I didn't really care whether I smoked or not. And I was theoretically not permitted to drink; I'm sure I thought this was unreasonable. I didn't have a key to my own dormitory and couldn't go in and out as I wanted. I'm sure I griped about all these things.

B: Did you have to be let into...?

D: We had to be let in just like the students.

B: By Mr. Harrington.

D: By Mr. Harrington. I used to go to the Philadelphia Orchestra regularly. You got back at a reasonable hour, usually about midnight. And, as often as not, you would go all over the campus hunting for Mr. Harrington, and probably he was asleep in a chair tilted back against the wall near Miss Long's office. (Laughter.) Once, when we couldn't find him at all, a friend and I broke into one of the little dorms--I think Boletus--and spent the night there. When Mrs. Golder came as Dean, instantly many of the restrictions which Miss Robinson had imposed disappeared. We were given keys to the dorms and no longer had to keep particular hours. And we were allowed to smoke and to drink in moderation. I dare say if any of us had got really soused we would have been chucked out!

B: Was Mr. Harrington...?

D: Mr. Harrington was still there. I can't remember how long Mr. Harrington lasted, but a long time.

B: If you could, for people who may hear this tape a hundred years from now (laughter from Miss DeArmond), describe Mr. Harrington and tell about his role.

D: Well, Mr. Harrington was the police force really of the Women's College. He was already, I'd say, an elderly man--at least he seemed so to me--a short man with white hair and a mustache always stained with tobacco. Right? (Laughter.) And with a rather twinkling expression. I don't think he was always sober, and he was slovenly in appearance. I mean his collar was always open and his clothes not too clean. His great virtue, I think, was loyalty. And I suppose he did his duties reasonably well--but you didn't need much of a police force in those days anyhow. (Laughter.) You must remember.... (Laughter.)

B: Yes. I thought he was wonderful. (Laughter.)

D: Some people called him Mr. Harrington and some just called him, brusquely, Harrington.

B: Or Pop.

D: Pop Harrington. That's right; sure they did.

B: Well, this conversation is going the way it might with anyone reminiscing about the University, but you in your professional career were teaching English.

D: That's right.

B: And when you think of teaching English for forty beautiful years at the University of Delaware....

D: (Laughter) Sometimes beautiful (Laughter), not always.

B: If you were talking about the teaching of English in retrospect over those years to someone, perhaps a professional colleague or a person who would

know something about the teaching of English, when you looked back that far, what would you think of in terms of large changes or methods of teaching?

make it here

D: Well, it's certainly true--I guess of any teaching--that the more there are changes, the more it's the same thing. I think there are differences. I think, first of all, that students are not so well selected now. We have had in recent years more very able students and we've had also far more students who are not able at all. I think that the difference between the good students then and now is that, in general, they are much more sophisticated, more worldly. The students we had at the Women's College forty years ago were mostly nice little girls from a very provincial state, and they themselves were very provincial. I think that any kids of equal intelligence now are probably a good deal more sophisticated; they may very possibly also be more purposive. But what we teach and the way we teach it--though there have been minor changes, I don't think these amount to a great deal. *ff* Students today are not as literate as they used to be; there's no question about that. And we're not dealing very well or very honestly with the problem of basic illiteracy in college; we did better then. The classes were smaller; we didn't set up remedial programs as such, but we dealt more conscientiously with these problems than we are doing now. On the other hand, in those days we didn't have graduate students. So what we have done is to extend in both directions: we have people who would have been incapable of going to college in 1935 ~~who are here~~ and, on the other hand, we have people who are going far beyond what we had in 1935. We had no graduate program in English until about 1950, and then we had a handful of people taking Master's degrees. Our Ph.D. program is only about fifteen or sixteen years old; I think about 1960 we had our first in English. The earliest graduate programs were in Chemistry and Chemical Engineering in the period immediately after the war--the Second World War. *ff* As far as methods are concerned--frankly I'm not very much interested in methodology. I think a teacher is simply a person, whatever his field may be, who has interest and intellectual drive combined with a sense of personal commitment to the students he is teaching. And you have to combine this with students who are interested in whatever it is they're taking.

B: You were given at least one teaching award. Was it really one?

D: Two.

B: What were those? Were they for particular years or particular reasons...?

D: I won the first University Teaching Award, which was given in 1954; at that time there was one award with a comparatively small financial attachment. The cash was not really the main thing. Later, I should say in the sixties, about ten years ago, there was more money available and the University began giving several awards each year. ~~My second award, by the way, came in 1972.~~ What the teaching award amounts to, simply, is that students nominate teachers ~~that~~ ^{who} they think have done well by them. Then a committee, made up originally of faculty, now of both faculty and students--I've served on this committee--looks over all the nominations and decides on the basis of these recommendations. Anybody who knows anything realizes, particularly in a university as large as ours now is, that the award is symbolical. It doesn't really mean, though it may appear to, that somebody or other is top dog. It means that the University--the students and the administration and the faculty ~~too presumably~~ are saying that teaching is important. We recognize teaching in this fashion so that anybody who wins an award is a symbol of something that a university should stand for. I believe in the teaching award because I think it keeps reminding people that that's what our job is. And of course I'm convinced that we're hired--in spite of what some people think--we're hired to teach. This is our first job.

B: What do you think some people might think? That most...?

D: Well, obviously....

B: An opportunity to continue research and writing?

D: Yes. I think that a considerable number of ~~people~~^{teachers}, backed by a considerable number of administrators, think that research is the primary purpose. Now this may be true in certain fields, let's say in the College of Agriculture or the College of Engineering or in chemistry. Part of the reason for the existence of a university is research. But for most people hired by most colleges and most universities the primary job is teaching, and for some people it seems reasonable to expect that this is the whole of it. In other words, if I wish to play the flute for my own delectation, ~~this is~~^{that's} all right. But an English teacher, after all, is supposed to be teaching appreciation of literature, to be polishing students' prose style, and in some way to be enhancing their sense of values so that their lives are more interesting to them and perhaps more significant--so that they can contribute more significantly to society.

B: Do you think a large class in freshman English...?

D: Can make them literate? No.

B: In other words, the problem of illiteracy can't be handled when you've got too many students?

D: No, it can't. I think we fool ourselves, partly of necessity. We cannot do what we have to do for as many students as we have, and therefore we make pleasant noises: "We give everybody a chance if he's willing and able," etc., etc. And this isn't true. The only way a person will learn to write if he doesn't already know how--and almost anyone, even good writers who come to college well prepared, can improve--the only way is having help at an early stage. Which is what freshman English is about. But in addition he must live in an atmosphere where it is expected that he will write well and write a lot. And since a great many of the curricula at this university--at any university; we are not different--since many curricula do not require students to think coherently and write in an adult and reasonable fashion, obviously freshman English can't do very much. It should be one part of a constant pressure. I think we did better in the past before there were so many ways by which students could take machine-made or machine-rated tests and things of that sort. Of course, when I began this wasn't possible; I suppose we could have given multiple-choice tests, but they weren't very common, and a student was expected to come to college and write and write and write. In this way, if teachers supervised his writing carefully, if teachers didn't have too much to do to supervise, he really learned.

B: What is your opinion of the use of the graduate assistant? Again, it's very necessary because of the numbers.

D: Yes. I think it's a necessary evil. I myself of course went through a graduate program, and I was never a graduate assistant: I never even applied to become one. I think it's dangerous. It works for some people; but when the ordinary graduate assistant is taking courses himself and also teaching, he's going to be graded on the courses he takes. Nobody really, even if there's some supervision, is going to grade him on the teaching. The graduate assistantship therefore tends to encourage the student to think that teaching is not very important. ~~When~~^{When} I began teaching--Lawrence Willson, whom you will remember, and I were the young ones in our department--we two were said to be much the toughest teachers. In fact, both of us were taken

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to task by Dr. Sypherd, the chairman of the department, because we were too hard on our students--that is, as graders. You may not have known this. At any rate now--I hear it on all sides, so I'm sure it's true--most graduate assistants are too lenient with their students. I don't know whether this is because they themselves--they would have graduated in the sixties--have grown up in a very permissive society or whether--what I think is the case--they have never learned something that I think a teacher must be able to do: to distinguish between, on the one hand, his sense of a person as a person and his liking, or the opposite, for the student and, on the other, his judgment of that student's capacity. A good teacher--you can never do this perfectly of course--I think a good teacher must be ^{try} able to make this distinction. I have flunked students whom I liked and admired; I've given A's to students whom I disliked and distrusted. You have to make these distinctions, and a lot of young people nowadays, beginning teaching, don't seem able to do so. ^{new 9f} I also believe they have a notion, entirely erroneous, that you curry favor with students by giving them good grades. In my experience there are a few students who will resent it if you mark them down and love you dearly if you give them high grades. But also in my experience--and I've had a lot of it in a lot of places--a student is usually pretty honest in his judgment of you, and those you treat fairly, even if harshly, will usually not resent you and very often will like you. Many young teachers now don't seem to realize that this happens. I can't myself, I never could, give a student a grade in order to make him like me. I'd rather be liked by students than not, but I don't think I could ever be persuaded that this was the way to win their liking. I've had students whom I've treated harshly from an academic point of view, who without hypocrisy, I'm sure, have liked me and whom I've liked. A lot of younger teachers don't seem to understand this; I don't see why.

Another problem that is with us today is that, in the sixties, universities--particularly departments like English, mathematics, history, the basic academic subjects--turned out high school teachers so rapidly that very often these people were not of the quality we really want high school teachers to be. Some of the problems we face today in college are the result of the kind of teaching ^{students have} they've had. Some problems of course are the result of larger social conditions--the permissive society in general and television, as everyone says. But a great deal is that we did not have a chance to select the best people to go into the classrooms. Many of these people now have tenure; we are now turning out a smaller number of potentially very good teachers, but they can't get jobs. Like any other college teacher, in general I approve of tenure, but it does sometimes entrench those who are not first-rate, and to some extent this is what has happened. How we are going to escape this problem I don't see; for the moment we have to live with it.

But the larger issues are the disorders of our society in the last fifteen years or so, and we will not very easily recover from the difficulties of the sixties. This doesn't mean that I'm not reasonably hopeful that American democracy will survive, but I think that we are suffering in education from things that are much larger than just educational problems.... I'm not sure how relevant this is to what we are talking about.

B: I think these would be the underlying problems.

D: And I think it's hopeful, as a matter of fact, that the pressure on students to go to college is very much less than it used to be. More students, often intelligent students, are now saying: "Well, there are other things just as good or better; I'm not going to go to college now." But there's still tremendous pressure to go. This is really outside my bailiwick, but it's even more significant and, I think, hopeful that people are beginning to

say, "Why keep everybody in school till eighteen?" Why does everyone have to graduate from high school? Why not set up alternative programs and let kids quit ordinary school at fifteen or sixteen? In other words I think that if fewer people were graduated from high school and if more people went into other kinds of work than essentially the academic, colleges would also improve. The dropping rate of entrance into college is an excellent thing: we have far too many people trying to pursue a single track, a single more or less intellectual kind of training.

Aspect > B: Of course the problem is what about the other jobs--the skilled jobs disappearing when we really need additional highly skilled technicians.

Aspect > D: This is true, but on the other hand we need a great many people to do simple ordinary things that really aren't very simple. We need more good plumbers, builders, carpenters, more good this, that, and the other. I think it's a misunderstanding of democracy to assume that these people are not valuable and important. My idea is not that you go into carpentry and are therefore to be considered inferior to someone who takes a P.H.D., but that each is doing something worth doing. If we could only make people realize that there are different ways of making their own lives satisfying and also of satisfying the needs of society, we would be much better off.

B: What has been your particular interest? You taught American literature for how many years?

D: I taught American literature from 1937 until I retired; so it's pretty nearly forty. I went into American literature actually because--lots of people have done this kind of thing--it was the most vacant field at the time I started working. Now it is terribly overcrowded. If you look at any bunch of people applying for a college job in English, a large proportion of them will be in American literature. But I went into it because at the time it seemed fresh and interesting and uncrowded. You see, I didn't train to do this primarily. First, I trained in Elizabethan drama; then in eighteenth century literature. Well, I never taught Elizabethan drama except peripherally as a part of other courses, and I did teach eighteenth century literature a few times, but not very often.

B: What was your favorite American author in terms of teaching?

D: I think Henry James. Several times I've taught graduate courses with James as the focus--courses in which James is one of several figures or in James alone. He seems to me one of the great novelists in English. I think also that the reputation of James, or the change in his reputation, is interesting. When I first became interested in James, when I was an undergraduate, I think I had already read only Daisy Miller and perhaps a few short stories. But I became addicted to him when I was about twenty-one. James had been dead a relatively short time--less than twenty years--and, oh, yes, everyone knew Henry James, but after all he wasn't very important. And for a good many years afterwards James was the kind of writer that people nodded to politely but didn't pay much attention to. I've lived long enough now to see him become, in the eyes of critics and English teachers and a great many students, one of the great writers of our time. This kind of rise--and fall--in popularity is characteristic of the whole pattern of English literature. When I began teaching, for example, Donne was not considered by any means a major writer. He was a minor figure of the seventeenth century, an innovator who wrote some curious and interesting prose and poetry. Now he is included in almost any anthology of major writers. The same sort of up-and-down happens in many cases. I suspect--though I'm naturally not sure of this--that Henry James's reputation will drop again, but I'm convinced that he is one of the great and lasting American writers--indeed, as I've said, one of the great novelists in English literature. These things

change. When I first taught American literature, for instance, I did not teach Faulkner, but did teach Thomas Wolfe. Now nobody reads Wolfe so far as I know, whereas Faulkner is very, very important. I began by teaching Steinbeck, and I'm not sure that anyone teaches him now, except possibly for Of Mice and Men and that's relegated to high school classes. ~~What-you-see-invariably-if-you-teach-for-a-long-time-is-changes-in-style~~

What you see invariably if you teach a long time is changes in style. My orientation as a teacher was of course historical. The teachers who came a generation after me for the most part took a literary-critical point of view. Now we're swinging back again towards the historical. I don't consider any of these points of view sacred or any of them complete. I think we learned a great deal from what was called the "new criticism." We learned to ask students--and ourselves-- to look at pieces of writing in detail, to read less and to read more carefully, especially poetry. But the new criticism also had the very serious effect of cutting literature off from life, particularly from the life of the writer and his times; and I believe this error is beginning to be rectified. The new criticism is no longer so popular as it was, and I think this is good. Different people growing up in different periods more or less correct the balance in one way or another, and there is inevitably a change of opinion. When I began to teach, the Victorian period was looked upon, for one thing, as old hat and, for another, as narrow-minded and fussy. Right now we're in a Victorian revival--even a revival, heaven help us, of some of the artistic atrocities of the period. Terrible Victorian furniture along with good things coming back. But Tennyson is now on the way up again: the really good writer, like the really good artist, has staying power and will probably return. I doubt whether many great writers are completely lost. They go in and out of fashion, but I don't think they disappear.

B: What do you think the value of writers' workshops is?

D: I have very little sympathy with workshops in general. (Laughter.) I think they're often a thumb-twiddling business, and I doubt whether people learn to write in workshops. Writing is a very lonely business; I don't believe one learns much about writing in groups. I'm not sympathetic to colloquia and workshops as a means of teaching.

B: You don't know any writers who have come out of writers' workshops?

D: I dare say there are some, but I must say that I'm not vividly aware of them. (Laughter.) I'm not even sure that the current tendency of colleges to employ people who are practicing writers is good. I don't think that the practicing writer is necessarily able to teach. I wonder whether he always knows, although sometimes he does--Henry James is a great exception, I think--knows how he gets his effects. And, a little like the graduate assistant, he is divided in his mind. Nowadays of course teaching is one of the ways a creative writer makes his living. And I understand that from this point of view, economically, it's a good thing. I remember Robert Frost's speaking of himself as a "domestic" or "domesticated" poet, but I doubt whether Frost created very many poets while teaching in college, and I don't believe that his teaching helped him be a better poet. I'm not certain that the creative writer belongs in a university, and I have little faith in someone's taking courses in how to write a poem or a short story.

B: Well, I think that....

D: Yes, you can learn expository writing, but not creative writing. And I feel the same way about painting or music.

B: I was going to say, it's like the artist in residence.

D: Yes, the artist in residence, the musician, or whatever.

B: What about Robert Hillyer's coming to the University?

D: Well, as I understand it--I heard this from a number of people who would be better judges than I-- Robert Hillyer was apparently that rare bird who did have the knack of teaching. That rare creative artist who has the ability to teach; there are some. Besides, if a university for its own prestige likes to attach to itself someone who is really important, that's all right. But I question if such a person is ordinarily part of the genuine teaching process. For instance, Hillyer was not particularly successful in teaching the senior English seminar; this was not what he was cut out to do. He read poetry superbly, and not all poets do. He had the gift of stirring students' imaginations, and if they had a natural creative aptitude, he did something--often a great deal--for them. But he was a rarity--and, by the way, a most charming person.

B: But don't you think that that person probably, as you said, would be the lonely worker and would not be a group person?

D: Right. I think that colleges now yearn for such people. There are quite talented young men and women ~~with a knack at~~ literature, music, or what not, but who are still not first-class creative minds. I don't object to having them, but I think we bank upon their being successful in a way that the result does not usually prove.

For what it's worth, the subject that has been of most interest to me and taken most of my attention in the last fifteen years is a course in the English Bible. This was a course established at the University, I don't know how far back, by Dr. Sypherd, who taught it for many years. Despite the fact that he was an old man even when I first ~~knew him~~ and in many ways very conventional, I know enough to realize that in teaching the Bible he was extremely open-minded and objective, not at all religious in the narrow sense. Then after he gave up the course when he became President, Dr. Able took it over; he had a better linguistic background than either Dr. Sypherd or I: he knew Greek. I don't know either Greek or Hebrew, but since the course is the Bible in English I hope this doesn't matter too much. At any rate this is the most exciting course I've taught in the latter part of my academic career.

I should go back to say how I happened to teach it. Either the last or next to the last year that Dr. Able had it, I decided, because I didn't have a systematic knowledge of the Bible, to take it with him. I started by sitting in on the course for a few days, but I was really bitten, and so I stayed through the whole term. I don't think I missed a class. A couple of years later when he retired, the department wanted someone to teach the course. Being still remarkably young and foolish--I was plenty old enough not to be--I said, "Very well; I'll do it." It was one of the best decisions I've ever made.

The first year I taught it, I kept a record of how much time I spent on it. I think this may be quite interesting statistically to anybody who wants to know more about teaching! The class met for three fifty-minute periods a week; I spent an average that first year of twenty-seven hours a week preparing for it. Nine hours for every fifty minutes; I worked like a demon--I had to. There were too many things I didn't know, and the students--I've

always encouraged this in class--would ask me questions I'd not know how to answer. So between that period and the next I'd have to find out. This is of course the way one learns, and now I have it all pretty well under my belt, I suppose. Each year I change the course to some extent, add a little here, take out something there, modify it in response to the students. *new A* It is endlessly fascinating, and it has been a particularly rewarding course to teach because nobody has to take it--nobody. Of course I've had lots of students in English, history, other liberal arts, but also in physics, engineering, chemistry, home economics--all over the countryside. And most students in the course are extremely good: I have had more A's in it than in any other course I teach, and it's not easy. On the other hand, there've been some poor students because they've come in without sufficient interest in history, and some are deceived by the fact that they've taught Sunday School for years to nice little children and imagine we're going to do the same sort of thing here--and it doesn't work out that way. But partly because it's really outside my own field and because it's an enormous area anyhow, I never finish and never will. Something new is happening all the time.

B: You sound like the Rabbi in the....

D: (Laughter.) I doubt whether I am. You see, what happens is that something new is dug up somewhere--I'm sure I can't keep track of everything, but I find out a good deal--and it instantly changes what I have to say. I'm more or less on the front edge every minute.

B: When you say "dug up" you mean the Dead Sea Scrolls or...?

D: Yes.

B: Or foundations of old buildings?

the course D: New research, which very often is something that's been dug up. When I started ~~teaching~~, which wasn't really long ago, I said it was probable that the story of the Tower of Babel came from Mesopotamia; after I'd taught for a few years some archeologist found the tablets with the Tower of Babel story on them--in Mesopotamia! This, I suppose, is the kind of excitement that scientists have. I regret that I don't know Hebrew and Greek, but fortunately it's not difficult to find out the backgrounds of key words in both languages, and a great deal of the scholarship is now in English. There's more to read than I can possibly keep up with, and the Bible is, after all, only one of the things I've done in the last fifteen years. But ~~on the whole~~ it's been the most exciting activity of my recent academic life.

B: Probably you do need to concentrate, work hard, to find the answers.

no p D: That's part of it. The other is the attitude of the students, because if you get a group, most of whom are essentially ignorant of the Bible but who want to learn more and have open minds, it's great fun to see what happens to them. On the final examination I almost always include at least one question which is not about how much they know or anything of the usual sort. I say something like, "What that you read in the Bible was most surprising to you," or "What did you least expect to find?" Of course I get all sorts of answers. The one I cherish most: almost all of them are astonished that the Bible has so much humor; they don't anticipate this element at all. I suppose they wouldn't take the course in the first place unless they thought it would be interesting, but I think most of them find it more interesting than they expect.

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They fall into various categories. I've had a great many Jewish and Catholic students, and all varieties of Protestants. In general the Jews and Catholics are most receptive to the course. Some of the Catholics have the attitude well, I've never read anything in the Bible before, so I have no prejudices one way or another. The Jewish students very often know the Old Testament--some of them of course know Hebrew--and they're often able to help me out on things I don't know. They have been excellent in their attitude towards the course and have adjusted to the secular view very well. The Protestants are of two sorts, ~~Most are~~ ~~exactly like those I've been mentioning,~~ but the students who have disliked the course or resented my approach have almost all been Protestants, right-wingers who belong to the various fundamentalist churches. At the beginning of the course I always say that it is taught from a non-sectarian point of view, which of course it must be because the group of students is mixed and Delaware^{is} a secular institution. I try to make clear that the approach is objective and scientific--we look at the Bible as history and literature and from a textual standpoint. Almost always a student or two will come up at the end of the first class and either ask for more detail or drop out. I've had occasional trouble with students who have stayed and then been unable or unwilling to accept the principles I have set, and a few have been fairly obstreperous. On the other hand, I've had students who were fundamentalists--and this seems very interesting--who have taken the course precisely because their view is different. Once in a while someone has said, "Well, I'll answer the questions you ask in the way that you want them to be answered, but of course I don't believe what I say." For instance, on a test they will argue the authorship of the first five books of the Bible from a scholarly point of view and then add, "Well, these books were really written by Moses." (Laughter.) I've had a few who've tried to interrupt class discussion to bend the situation to their own purposes. I had one student a couple of years ago, a very sincere boy, who well along in the term when he'd interrupted for the nth time and I'd suggested that he not do so again, said flatly, "I am in this course to save the souls of everybody in this room"! And I've had many discussions, in some cases you might call them arguments, with students out of class. I'm always willing to talk in this fashion to students regardless of point of view, and I've got along perfectly well with most of them.

But most of those who take this course are willing to buy the approach I take, to study the Bible as a work of history and literature, and come to a greater appreciation because of this. I try never to be iconoclastic: that is, I never say anything with the intention of affronting anybody, though obviously some people are affronted. But that's a different matter, and a ~~good~~ teacher conveys by his tone whether he is being as objective as possible or is deliberately needling someone. I've had the pleasant experience of having Jewish students come up at the end and say, "Of course I've never read the New Testament before. It's fascinating. I had no idea ~~the~~ Jesus was a perfectly good Jew and held exactly the same ideas as the prophets I believe in." And one Catholic student, I remember, thanked me by saying, "It was just like you're opening a window and letting in fresh air." It's this that makes it so interesting, the response of the students, as well as the fascination of the material itself.

B: You're still teaching, aren't you?

D: Yes, I'm teaching the Bible right now, in Extension in Wilmington at Wil-Castle, and I hope I'll be able to continue. I also had the experience last fall, almost immediately after I'd retired, ~~in~~ teaching a mini-course in the Bible at the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Wilmington. When the minister asked me whether I'd be willing to do this--we met some time during the summer-- I said, "I'm not a Presbyterian or indeed anything

much like it, and I don't know whether my approach will be acceptable to you, to your group." He replied, "Oh, it will be all right." And it certainly was. This was a group of adults....

B: Do you find that an interesting change for you? Are there any phases that you can find in Continuing Education courses versus the usual students that you've been used to?

D: I haven't taught enough in Continuing Education to make a real judgment on this, but I think one of the most interesting developments of recent years in this university--and I'm sure in almost all others--is simply that fact that there are so many more adults than there used to be. There are many people a generation or part of a generation older than the ordinary undergraduates. When these people first began to come in, they were so rare that they seemed uncomfortable, and most of the regular students were uncomfortable with them. But there are now so many that everybody takes their presence in stride. These older students have the great advantage over the usual undergraduate of more experience and maturity, and of course they are here only if they are really interested. And they are extremely useful members of a class: they have courage to speak up, express their opinions, and they are usually bright--as the education people say, highly motivated--~~one~~ of the delights of teaching nowadays.

B: What about your experience in teaching as a woman? Has your being a woman affected your career?

D: So far as the teaching itself is concerned, I don't think my being a woman has any relevance whatever. In other words, I have taught exactly the same kinds of courses as the men, and I've carried the same kinds of schedules and all the rest of it. But I don't think there is a question--I believe any woman of my age would tell you the same thing--that being a woman in this very masculine world of the upper academic reaches has been a very tough business. This is something that you mightn't know, and I think it is quite interesting. Fifteen or twenty years ago the Modern Language Association made a study of women in college and university teaching to find out who was in it and when and how. What they discovered in the course of this survey--and I'm sure this is essentially accurate--is that at the end of the nineteenth and the beginning of the twentieth centuries there were a good many women, particularly in certain fields. (MLA was interested of course in people in English, French, and other languages and literatures.) Then a change took place with people born in 1910. Miss Clift and I were both born in 1910, and I think we understand what happened. We came of age professionally--I mean that we were ready to enter the profession of college teaching--during the depression. And when there are few jobs, women don't get them. What actually happened is that a very few of us were lucky enough to get into the sequence and stay in it. But if you look around you, you will discover that women like Miss Clift and me, who are just retiring, who have just reached sixty-five, represent a comparatively small number of women; ^{and} there is a gap of almost a generation before there is any significant number of women again. There are very few women in this academic game between our age and the group that's coming up to forty now.

B: Why?

D: A whole generation, you see, is missing. Because, first, of the depression, then the war--the Second World War, and after the war the push to marry and have big families. So that for something like twenty-five years, very few women went into ^{college} teaching.

B: But you're saying that you and Eve Clift came in at the bottom of the depression.

D: Yes. We're among a handful of people, the sort of rear guard of that first or second generation of women teachers in college who managed to get in, and then there's a long, empty period afterwards. We just made it, so to speak. This is one point. The other is the fact--and there's no question about this--that all the years of my academic life and hers there was often overt and certainly undercover discrimination of one kind or another. When I began to teach, I received the same salary that any new man with my credentials did. But over the years the salary fell back and back and back; later, in comparatively recent times when you frequently got a percentage increase, if your salary was already smaller than that of your male colleagues, you got still farther behind. In addition, a woman had a much harder time--and I think this is still true--getting a promotion. I was first put up for full professor in 1954; I got my professorship in 1968.

B: Did you complain during those years?

D: I was put up over and over again for a good many years because I had a department chairman, Dr. Allen, who was willing to go to bat for me--and did repeatedly. At one point we had a dean, Dr. Squire, who was also willing to support me. But after I'd been recommended a good many years, Dr. Allen was told--according to what he told me himself--not to put DeArmond up again. And I was myself told by the dean, who shall be nameless, that I was not a fit person to be a professor. What you have, as I say, sometimes overt discrimination and sometimes something more subtle. *then* [^] *Q* Let's face it: nobody is perfect, and a person who's making distinctions can always find some shortcoming to keep you from getting the increment in salary or the raise in rank. If it isn't on one ground, then it's on another. I don't think that any official has seriously objected to my teaching, but there are always weaknesses in anybody's work, and this device is constantly used to keep women down. At the moment women have a much better chance than they've had in a long time--in my lifetime, and this University has brought in a good many women. But a thing I think very interesting: a couple of years before I was to retire, I made a real effort to introduce to the English Department as a candidate for an associate or, I hoped, a full professorship a woman who seemed to me exceptionally good--and I could never get this woman even interviewed for a job! In the English Department I am not merely the only woman in its entire history who has been a professor, but there has never been any woman brought in at tenured rank. We have appointed any number of associate and full professors, but they have always been men. Of the handful of women--and we've had only a handful--no one has ever come in except at one of the lower ranks, and only Ann Weygandt has reached an associate professorship, except for a new young woman we have now.

besides me,

I remember a good many years ago, after Miss Drake retired, and Miss Dyer was the only remaining woman professor in chemistry. The head of the Chemistry Department said, "We don't need women in our department--at least one is enough--because we don't have many women students." But the English Department has always had a preponderance of women students, and this has never been considered a reason to have very few men. The principle has worked one way, but not the other.

It may be important also for you to realize--what you have probably never thought of--that at the time that I came to Delaware--the time Miss Dyer,

Miss Clift, and other older women on the faculty, now mostly retired, came-- there had to be a woman in each of several departments. There was a slot, for example, for a woman in the English Department of the University, a person assigned specifically to the Women's College. And I was, as I've said, lucky enough to get that job. Ten years later, however, when the colleges were combined, the University was no longer under compulsion to bring in more women. Those of us who were already here because we were attached to the Women's College--Mrs. Bohning is the only one left--sneaked in, so to speak, through the back door. But once the Women's College was gone, the University saw no reason to employ more women--and it obviously didn't.

B: Why did you choose to remain at the University of Delaware? Certainly you who had received teaching awards and had the respect of the students and the English Department would have been offered other opportunities at other places.

D: Yes. This is perfectly true. I was offered other possibilities several times and at least one was very attractive to me. I almost went to Goucher, and there were other openings, one in the Middle West, one in northern Pennsylvania. But I really liked Delaware very much. Part of the reason --and I'm sure this is important to other people as well--is geographical location. I'm an Easterner and fairly urban, and being close to Philadelphia, New York, Baltimore, Washington is important. Another reason is that I have genuinely liked most of the people I've had to do with. I've enjoyed my colleagues in the English Department and a great many other members of the faculty. I have liked, I should think, ninety-nine percent of my students, even those that weren't particularly able, and I've had an opportunity to teach a variety of courses. Now, it's true that I counted up recently and found out that I had taught freshmen English seventy-one times--which was dotty even to think about (laughter) and certainly dotty to do. But I did have a chance to teach many things I was interested in. That's part of it. But also I was able to vary my work by teaching in other places--at the University of Pennsylvania and Goucher College. And I've taught three times overseas.

My first opportunity came about 1955 when Professor Robert Spiller of the University of Pennsylvania recommended me to go to the University of Kiel, Germany, to help set up an American Studies program. But Delaware said that it had not had sufficient notice of this project and would not permit me to leave. After that disappointment, at the suggestion of Dean Squire, one of my good friends and supporters, I applied for a Fulbright grant. I gave western Europe as the location I preferred, and after various backings and fillings, I was assigned to Munich, Germany, probably the best place I could possibly have gone. For one thing the University is very famous and an excellent institution. For another, Munich was a fascinating place to live. I worked hard, but I had a good deal of leisure: I seldom had much work at weekends, and compared with what I was used to doing at Delaware, I had a lot of free time. So I went to concerts and the theatre, travelled--had a great deal of fun.

The experience of teaching at the University--it was the first place besides Delaware where I'd taught, and I was in Munich a year--was extremely interesting. The students were candidates for either a Ph.D. or what we call certification for teaching, a program, however, with a very much higher standard than in this country. I found almost all the students very good indeed, and most of them wrote English better than most of the American students I had taught. They were the most intellectually stimulating that I have taught to this day. The experience was so rewarding in every way, so refreshing, such an adventure,

that I was bitten with the idea that I wanted periodically to go to some foreign country to teach.

So after ten years--Munich was 1956-1957--I tried to get another teaching job overseas. This time I didn't work through Fulbright but through a person I knew at the University of Sheffield, England, and that is where I went. I'd been in Germany a full year; I was in England only seven months, from January to August; and my teaching was quite different. In Munich I had mostly given lecture courses at various levels. Here I taught only tutorials, which was what I wanted because I hoped to get to know students intimately as you do in small classes. In both places I taught works and writers in English and American literature, most of whom I knew pretty well already. ⁹ The other reason I went to England was that, between the time I was in Munich and 1967, I had taken over the chairmanship--I didn't have any title at the beginning--of the English-Education program. About four hundred students were in it, very nearly half ~~five~~ majors, and the program was for students who were expecting to teach in the secondary schools, mainly in Delaware. I had also supervised student teachers, and I'd made contact with many high school English teachers. I had advised, oh, I suppose hundreds of students in the program, and I'd become much interested in the way we were, and in some senses were not, preparing our students to be teachers. Since I knew that English universities were more selective than ours and English schools presumably better than most of ours, I wanted to go to England. England was also important because on this project a real command of the language, more than I had had in Germany, was essential. It seemed to me also that I wouldn't learn very much unless I taught in a university and in that way had a standard of comparison. What was the product of the schools like?

This time I was on sabbatical from Delaware--that is, I had a salary, which I had not had before. So I attached myself to the University of Sheffield on an honorarium of only two hundred pounds as a member of its English Department. I made contact too with Education, and I spent a considerable part of my time going around to secondary schools of all sorts--that is, public schools in the English sense, private schools, comprehensive modern schools, the old-fashioned segregated schools for boys and girls, ~~the~~ grammar schools, and even one or two elementary schools, as we would call them. I visited various universities too--the traditional collegiate type like Durham; Bath, a technological university just developing liberal arts and teacher training programs; and teachers' colleges. In short, I made all sorts of contacts and did many different things. This was an entirely different experience from Munich. By and large the students I taught--these were candidates for bachelors' degrees--were not so good as those in Munich. I don't think one could have expected them to be: they were not so advanced and not so sophisticated intellectually. But they were, on the whole, distinctly superior to mine at home, because they were more carefully selected.

Seven years later I decided that I wanted to go abroad for a different reason and to a different place. This time I wanted to try another part of the English-speaking world in order to find out what the literature of another English colonial society was like, not by reading books here but by reading them in context. Of course I was also interested in how the British educational program operated in a colonial society. Canada was too much like the States, and I'd been there many times already; South Africa was out for political and social reasons; New Zealand or Australia seemed the most likely places, and since I'd never been in either I thought they'd be rather fun. So I managed to get a job very much like the one at Sheffield at the University of New England. It's in the northern part of New South Wales, and about twenty years ago it separated itself from the University of Sydney.

Stimulating
 This too was a most interesting experience. Australia is more like this country than any other place I know, except of course for Canada. It has most of the faults and virtues of the United States; indeed it is quite Americanized. The university likewise is more like what I know at home, but New England is less good academically than Delaware and the students not so good as our best ones. I didn't have as much chance to get out and into the schools as I'd hoped; I was teaching in a small, remote town and didn't have, as in Sheffield, easy opportunity to go from place to place. I did, however, see the products of the schools and thus learned a little of what was happening there. As far as I am able to judge it, the educational system in Australia is inferior to ours: my students certainly were not well trained. But like youngsters here, the students were friendly, warm-hearted, and attractive personally, if not ~~like most of ours~~ very intellectual. *again like ours* ¶ The other half of the experience--Australia is a huge country and I was there only five months--the exposure to Australian life and the beginning of serious acquaintance with Australian literature were very profitable indeed. One of the reasons I undertook this jaunt was that I hoped to teach Australian literature when I came back, and--~~this was~~ a year ago this past semester--I did teach the first course in Australian literature ever given at Delaware--and one of the very few such courses offered anywhere in the country. The course had a small group of enthusiastic students; as far as one can tell from a first go-around, it was a success. I had hoped to find out by actual contact with the people and the country and the literature what happened when the English tradition and literature were transplanted to another country. I have a background in English literature developed over many years; I've taught American literature for a long time. Now I know a third aspect of, let's say, Anglo-Saxon culture, and this to me seems *profitable valuable*.

new ¶
 I wish I had more time to go on teaching because I think all this might also be profitable to my students. A teacher I knew at Swarthmore, who retired recently, an amusing and witty man, said as he was leaving the college that he'd been there a long time and enjoyed it very much--but he'd enjoyed it a great deal more because he had been able to be away so often! I'm sure this is true for me. I believe I've taught overseas more than almost anyone else on the faculty at Delaware, certainly more than anyone else in the English Department. It's been enjoyable and stimulating. *¶* Many people would say that I should have put those sabbaticals into doing research and turning out books and articles. Well, I'm not very much interested in that. I have one book that's gone through two editions, several articles, and lots of reviews, enough to satisfy myself that I can do it if I want to, but I really don't feel it's very important. There's a great deal of talk to the effect that, if you're not doing research, you *or poems* ~~really~~ can't be very good at teaching. I don't buy this at all--if by research is meant publication. I dare say I could have dragged it in by its tail if I had wanted, but my one book I've had occasion to refer to in my long teaching career in exactly one course that I taught just once. There is no necessary connection between your research and your teaching. I think that for a person in literature the important thing is to keep on reading, not just reading novels ~~or poetry~~ that are pleasant or amusing, but reading, reading, reading in a purposeful, relevant pattern. This is far more likely to affect your teaching favorably than research. It's been helpful, for instance, that I've had to review a large number of books.

The other important thing--and I gave a lot of my time over fifteen years to it--was the whole English Education job. I don't at all accept the notion that English teachers in universities and colleges are somehow above their contemporaries in the schools; and it's enlightened self-interest to see that the kind of people we send out to teach are good. Therefore I deplore the ivory-tower attitude that many college teachers seem to have. I have enjoyed especially going out into the schools to see what goes on there and to watch my own students, in many

cases, develop into good teachers. This is one of the things that I've done at the University that to me has been valuable and that most of my colleagues hardly value at all. This work didn't do me any good worth mentioning in getting promoted or winning raises in salary, yet to me it seems an important service to the University and profitable to me personally. I think it made me a better teacher and gave me more understanding of the whole professional scene. But it is not the sort of thing that counts—because you don't sit down and write about it or even necessarily talk about it very much.

B: Who is doing this job now?

D: Frank Newman is doing it. He was on my committee for years, and he is an excellent man. He's doing a great deal of hard work and I suspect that he's undervalued for it. There are fewer students now in English-Education, since when you can't supply jobs, they're less likely to go into it; but it obviously will continue. When you compare the importance the English Department, a promotion-and-tenure committee, and the University's higher-ups place on various things, they will put great importance on the chairman of the graduate program or of Freshman English, but they may forget entirely about the English-Education committee. Because of that program I served on a series of state committees; I acted as liaison between English and the College of Education; I ~~was even on a search committee for a member~~ ^{down on} of the College of Education. I managed to get along harmoniously with all those people. But most of the University, including my own department, didn't know these things were going on at all. That may have been partly because I was a woman, but I don't think entirely. (Laughter) Well...?

B: Do you think that's what you ^{want} ~~have~~ to say?

D: Yes, I guess so.

B: Thank you very much.