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Interview with Jefferson F. Pool in Middletown, Delaware, January 12, 1973, by Rebecca Button. Subject: Delaware College

Q This tape is part of the Oral History Project of the University of Delaware, made on January 12, 1973 with Jefferson Ford Pool of the class of 1921 at Delaware College, of Welmsy Farm, Middletown, Delaware.

A I am delighted to be a part of this program and can say that my decision to come to Delaware was perhaps made for me by my older brother, Frank R. Pool, Jr., who entered Delaware in the fall of 1916. It was a foregone conclusion that I should enter Delaware as did my brother. The preparation for college was at Middletown High School, and unfortunately it was a three-year high school at that time, so we entered Delaware with conditions in modern language and advanced algebra. The journey to Delaware from McDonough was about an hour's drive and our suitcases were packed and we brought the necessary attire to launch our stay at college. Incidentally, I had the privilege of living at the Kappa Alpha House and enjoyed the fraternity life.

Upon entering college, our bills were paid at the beginning of each semester and were paid in cash. My first impressions of Delaware of course were a little bit modified to the extent that while my brother was a freshman we came over to see the various athletic events so that the campus was not unknown to me. The impressions of course were favorable and the whole matter was quite enjoyable.

Q What were the teachers that you remember best?

A In my freshman year, ^[Finley] Dr. Foster, our English professor, was very interesting and we all enjoyed working for him. And then later on Dr. C. C. Palmer of the Animal Husbandry Department was an outstanding classroom teacher.

Q Did most of your professors lecture? Were there kinds of class projects or was it almost all lecture hall?

A The matter of teaching was almost entirely lecture hall, except one outstanding teacher, Dr. Rawlings, taught trigonometry and he would fill the blackboard full of numbers and say, "Any questions?" and nobody had enough sense to ask questions, and he'd erase the blackboard while we were still stunned as to the results.

Q That was a little difficult, wasn't it? When you were enjoying yourself at college, what were the dances like? Were most of them at the fraternity houses, or Old College?

A When I was on campus, of course, the women's college was separate and apart from the men's college and we would have tea dances at the women's college and occasionally would have an evening affair. Such dances were always chaperoned by the various members of the faculty and we had to make our adieus at 10:30 in the evening. Now on the men's campus we would have the usual Junior Prom and the Farewell Hop and also occasionally we would have a house party where Dr. and Mrs. Dutton and even Mrs. ~~McQue~~ ^{Cue} were most desired and friendly chaperones.

- Q Do you remember particularly some of your very best friends, possibly roommates, KA brothers.
- A You know, we had a large number of commuters, boys who'd come down from Wilmington on the early morning train and we on campus didn't get to know them as well as the men that lived on campus and largely in fraternity houses. In fact, our freshman class was the first class to occupy Harter Hall, so therefore living in the fraternity house, my classmates George Sipple and Bob Jefferson were perhaps my closest friends on campus, except of course Howard Alexander and Arnold Barnard and well, there were just a lot of guys that I was very fond of.
- Q Were most of those men from Delaware and were there any men in the fraternity house that came from more than 100 miles away.
- A We were very provincial, may I say. Most of the men on campus were from Delaware or from nearby Eastern Shore--Maryland. We had a number of fellows from Elkton; Howard Alexander, John Alexander, Hasson Terrell, but there were no foreign students in our class and we were quite local. *Hasson*
- Q Where did you hang out? Where was the place where everybody went informally to have fun together--aside from the KA house.
- A Well, strange as it may seem, even though we had two hotels and a wholesale liquor house in Newark, there was very little drinking and nobody hung out at the bars, and our gathering place would be at the fraternity house after dinner, and on the weekends 90% of us would go home.
- Q What about cars? Did any of the men at Delaware College--did anybody have a car then?
- A There was one outstanding example. A boy by the name of Tom Swing from Rising Sun was the only man on campus with a car. And he was quite the boy. Later on perhaps Skip Graer from Milford would show up once in a while in a car, but they were the exception rather than the rule. *[unclear]*
- Q Do you remember what kind of cars they had?
- A I would be afraid to make a guess; that's been so long ago.
- Q Did most of the students read newspapers, did they talk about current events very much?
- A Of course Delaware was a border state in the late unpleasantness, and particularly the downstate fellows were all members of the Democratic Party. Politics at election time were freely discussed and perhaps warmly discussed. As to reading newspapers, yes, of course. The daily paper was delivered at the fraternity house and also we had a reading room at Parnell Hall which was provided by the Wilmington Y.M.C.A., which was always furnished and available for those persons that wanted to read and enjoy the quiet of the facility. *u*
- Q What about the sports? How many of the KA's were playing football?

A My experience of course came before scholarships and big-time football. If you could get 22 men on the field at one time, you were lucky. And we all had to buy our own equipment, and in most cases for the freshmen it was hand-me-downs. And of course football was the leading sport when the fall term opened, and then of course later on in the winter basketball and spring, track and baseball. It was the desire of each fraternity house to put a number of men in the field in each sport. Dorsey Donahoe and Skeet Wilson were outstanding baseball players and Ellison Barnard and Fred Lord were outstanding basketball players. Our football stars of course were Harry Luce and Reed Graves.

Loose

Q Was there a lot of real school spirit? Were the games then played on Frazier Field?

A Well the school spirit was tremendous and we'd have pep rallies Friday night and well everything was pointed toward hopefully winning the game on Saturday. Of course all the games were played at Frazier Field and it was such a joy for the spectators to be able to drive their cars in and view the game from the bank and it was most enjoyable.

Q Who was the coach of the Delaware team then?

A During the war we had Dr. Aronowitz was our coach, and then Harold Shipley followed in the fall of 1919. Mr. McElroy was our basketball coach, and I believe he also coached baseball.

Q What about the classes? Were almost all of them held in Recitation Hall, or were they held in Old College--what was Old College like then? What kinds of things happened in Old College?

A Most classes were held in Recitation Hall and also in the Engineering Hall. Of course the ag courses were held in lower campus in Wolf Hall. Old College at that time, of course we had the cafeteria on the second floor, and we had a very well furnished and pleasant lobby on the second floor east and a small dining room on second floor west. On the first floor we had the locker rooms for the students and the west wing of Old College first floor was where we had our morning devotional services, where we would meet each morning to have the assembly. And Willard Lang was the favored pianist and it was quite a sight to see him tarry and then put his hands down on the keyboard just at the stroke of the hour when we should begin.

Q What about the R.O.T.C. and the war? And how was the campus different at that time?

A Well of course Delaware College was a land grant college and as a part of that program we had to have the R.O.T.C. program and it was a compulsory course for your freshman and sophomore years and three days a week on Monday, Wednesday and Friday, we would have drill on Frazier Field. And since the classes followed immediately all the students that were in the R.O.T.C. program went directly to their classrooms in the military uniform.

Q Was there a special kind of program involving the time during the war when there might have been some training, a special training program?

- A During the First World War, the R.O.T.C. unit was federalized and we became known as the Student Army Training Corps, the S.A.T.C. program. And everyone was mustered into the army and we were under army regulations as to rising, taps and our life on campus was entirely different during that period. Our courses were more or less designed--I remember we had a very interesting course in topography, and we would go out on the road toward Kimbleville and do our field work. Of course the mathematical subjects were the order of the day rather than social studies, etc.
- Q What about the relation of the men's college with what was then a very new women's college campus?
- A Well, it's rather difficult to speak in that area except to say that the women's college of course was opened in 1914 and the original graduating class was in 1918, and the girls were very well protected against we boys on the upper campus. Miss Rich and Dean Robinson were very jealous of their girls and shielded them from we ornery boys.
- Q Did you have a curfew at men's college?
- A No, we had no curfew at men's college. We had liberty to do as we wished and I think by and large we were very well behaved.
- Q What about winter recreation--there was sledding or any kind of outdoor sports, any skating parties?
- A Well, during the winter, Quality Hill was the favorite spot for coasting. Large numbers of students and townspeople would enjoy the sledding on Quality Hill. As to skating parties, so far as I am concerned I don't recall any organized skating parties.
- Q What about vacations? Did students plan vacations together at any time or did they tend to go home, were most of them working on farms or taking summer jobs?
- A It was my experience that when college closed everybody went to their respective homes. I recall no organized summer vacations among the student body. I do remember, however, in the summer of 1919 there were six of we boys that went out in the Kansas wheat fields and thoroughly enjoyed the experience. It was Allén Cooch and Joe Wilson and Harold Alexander, Howard Jones and Henry Goggin and myself. And we helped with the harvest and it was a delightful experience. Howard
- Q Could you tell about that, about your trip and where you stayed and what the work was like?
- A We left Newark on the Capitol Limited, which was the crack B&O train at that time, and landed in St. Louis about noon the next day and then went on to Kansas City and transferred to the Santa Fe road and proceeded to Cherryvale where we had our first assignment, at Independence, Kansas. We lived in the home of our employer and the harvest at that area was very similar to Delaware in that the wheat was harvested by a binder and the sheaves were stacked in the field until threshing time. When our work was

finished at this site, we went on to Wichita and were hired out in the railroad station by farmers that had come looking for help. We hired out to a Mr. Hackney of Coldwater in Comanche County and for the first time in my life I was locked on a train. The men that had come to Wichita to get their help had the trainmen lock the doors so that at various stops on the way the farmers who didn't choose to go to Wichita could not outbid the contract that had been made earlier, so that was quite unusual.

- Q Did all of the students from Delaware stay together on the Kansas trip? Was it an ag department trip, or was it something--was it part of the war, was it hard for them, the farmers, at that time to get help?
- A This experience was not a part of the college program. We just happened to see a notice on the bulletin board where help was needed during this period. And we had planned to follow the harvest from Kansas to Canada, but the servicemen were returning from France and the crews were being made up, and by the time we finished our job at Coldwater, we were advised by the county agent not to go further north because of the influx of servicemen. We stuck together until that time, and two of the boys went on to the West Coast and the rest of us came home via Chicago and Detroit and Cleveland.
- Q Were all of the men who took part in this ag students?
- A Yes they were. We were all members of the School of Agriculture and just out for a summer's fun.
- Q What about the fraternities together? Was there a lot of cooperation--was there a fraternity council at that time? How did you interact as a KA with other people on the campus in other fraternities.
- A There was friendly rivalry, of course, among the fraternities, particularly at pledging time. The KA fraternity was on the hill, as was Sigma Phi Epsilon and Omega Alpha. We were all friends. There was no bitter rivalry.
- Q What were the living conditions like at Harter Hall? Were they very different? What was the new dorm like? Did you visit friends in the dorm?
- A Of course Harter Hall was just opened and all the facilities were brand new and it was quite delightful. However, except for stopping in to see a friend once in a while, my experience in Harter Hall was very very limited.
- Q Did most of the men who started at the time you did stay at Delaware? Was there a heavy dropout rate?
- A Most of the freshmen finished their early years, namely freshman and sophomore years. In those days we had pre-med and pre-law and those persons that were going on to law or medicine left Delaware at the end of their sophomore year, and of course there was a number of persons that didn't graduate. I hate to use the word dropout, because that's a modern expression, but for reasons best known to themselves, changes had to be made in their original program. During the S.A.T.C., quite a number of men came to Delaware to get out of the draft and as soon as the war was over they went back where they came from.

- Q Was there one very extraordinarily well respected and admired faculty person?
- A Well, of course that's very difficult to pinpoint except I would say Dr. ^{Sypherd} Wilber Owen Seyferd [sp] was an outstanding gentleman, professor, who was liked by everyone. There was another professor that everyone loved and that was Dr. Elisha Conover of the Ancient Language Department, as was Dr. Penny, the head of the Chemistry Department. He was a highly regarded gentleman of the old school.
- Q What was a class with Dr. ^{Sypherd} Seyferd like?
- A Well, he stood for no horseplay. You had to conduct yourselves as gentlemen. You had to do the work that was assigned to you and all in all it was a very excellent chance to improve your conduct and manners and behavior.
- Q Tell us something about what it was like--how close were students to their professors, how available were the professors outside of classroom time. Was it easy to approach them or were they not very approachable?
- A I will say all professors were very approachable. The classes were small at that time and the professors were in their offices at scheduled hours and it was not difficult at all to seek their counsel and advice.
- Q Was the whole attitude of the campus a very popular one during those years? Were there any scandals that happened during the years that you were in college--oh, things like any kind of legal problems for anyone there, any petty crime, anything like that?
- A I'm very happy to say that there were no periods of unrest or street brawls. Fifty years ago it seems that there were less controversial situations. Everybody went about their business and it was an entirely delightful atmosphere.
- Q Would you say that most of your classmates had a pretty good idea of what they wanted get at college? Were they there because they felt they needed it?
- A Well, of course I shall assume so, otherwise you wouldn't have come to Delaware if you didn't have a college education in mind as a part of your life endeavor. I know there were a number of freshmen who came to Delaware without positively knowing what their objectives were, and I'm quite willing to confess that I was one of those persons. But by and large we didn't come to Delaware to play.
- Q What about speakers? Was there any kind of lecture circuit? Were there speakers who traveled and did they find themselves at the Delaware campus at different times?
- A There were no speakers on tour during my years at Delaware College.
- Q What about chamber music--concerts, what about glee club?
- A It's interesting to note that the women's college provided string ensembles

and the lighter type of instrumental music. Of course the men had a glee club and we would go on tour in Wilmington, Dover, Milford and that of course was a gay time. That took place ordinarily during the spring vacation. Our theatricals were largely sponsored by townspeople rather than the university. This was long before the E-52 Players.

Q What about the townspeople? What was it like being in Newark as a student?

A The townspeople were very friendly. The faculty and their wives were residents. There was no animosity between the college students and the townspeople. The various town activities were participated in by the students and there was a general feeling of friendship throughout.

Q Did you get to know people like a doctor in Newark or a man who owned a drugstore? Was there a drugstore where people went in addition to the lounge at Old College?

A Doc Rhodes of course was an institution at Delaware. Everybody loved him and we would go to Rhodes Drugstore for our school supplies and it was a happy meeting place. Dr. Steel~~g~~ was the college doctor. He was well known and well liked. He had two sons that went to the University of Delaware. He had married a local girl. And Dr. Gelliek was also an M.D. at that time.

Q Did the churches make special arrangements for students? Was the church life that they had participated in at home continued when they were at college?

A Each college student went to the church of his choice. Most of the KA boys were Episcopalians and went to St. Thomas, but I'm sure each man sought his own church that he had attended prior to his coming to Delaware.

Q To your knowledge, did you take part or any of the KA fraternity brothers, did you take part in anything like clothing drives or toys collected at Christmas or any kind of special annual project of that nature.

A I can recall no organized effort to collect toys or otherwise do anything in the welfare area. I presume the townspeople took care of that in their usual way.

Q What about spending money and recreation that you might pay for, that was not just at the college or in Newark?

A Once in a great while several of we fellows would go to Wilmington to the Playhouse, which of course was quite an event. Ordinarily, our recreation so far as entertainment was concerned was confined to the movies in Newark.

Q Was that the State Theater or was there more than one movie house?

A The movie house at that time was situated on Main and Academy Streets. [Inaudible - tape interference] . . . earlier about several members of the faculty and their effectiveness. Now I should like to pay tribute to Dr. Samuel Child's Mitchell as president. Dr. Mitchell was the essence of politeness and was at his best in the classroom rather than as a public relations

*Gene Gilbert Craig**Barrett Cantwell*

man. His ability to remember names and relate the student to his home town and parents was uncanny and made one feel at home. When we entered Delaware as freshmen in 1917, our sponsors and best friends were members of the junior class. In my appreciation of the help given by Hugh Downing, Marvel Wilson, Specks Craig, Gary Cantwell and others, I should like to record the class yell of 1919. It follows:

Baby's in the high chair.
Who put him up there?
Pa, Ma, Sis-boom-bah.
1919, rah, rah, rah!

[END OF INTERVIEW]