

1981

UA68/8/2 James Meyer Oral History

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Recommended Citation

Bennett, James, "UA68/8/2 James Meyer Oral History" (1981). *WKU Archives Records*. Paper 880.
http://digitalcommons.wku.edu/dlsc_ua_records/880

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James Bennett: This is an interview with James E. Meyer, of Cincinnati, Ohio. At his golf course in Monroe, Ohio, on a beautiful day.

Jim, what years were you at Western?

James Meyer: I started in the fall of 1947, and would have graduated in 1951. I was drafted in 1950 and was in the Korean Conflict. I came back to Western in 1952 and finished up in 1953.

JB: How did you happen to choose Western? Monroe is your home right?

JM: Monroe is my hometown, a very small town. I had some friends that went to Middletown, who were under Coach Paul Walker, who was a student and basketball player under Ed Diddle. He was enthusiastic about us going down to Western and trying out for football.

JB: You said a while ago that you drove down, I guess that was an experience wasn't it?

JM: We drove down the first time around the fourth of July. I think in 1947. We were driving an old '38 Desoto that a friend of mine had. It was quite a trip.

JB: Do you have any idea how long it took you?

JM: Yes, it took us back then apporximately 12 hours. It's about 275 miles from Middletown.

JB: And you majored in Agriculture didn't you?

JM: Yes, I majored in Ag. I have a BS Degree in Science.

JB: Who are some of the professors that you remember there?

JM: Mr. Taylor, who was head of the Ag. Department. Dr. Massey, Dr. McNally, Dr. Dooley, Dr. Dooley, Dr. Stickles, who was head of the History Department, and Mr. Garrett, who was president at that time.

JB: Dr. McNally died a few years ago.

JM: I'm sorry to hear that. I also remember Dero Downing, he lived in a little house right before you got to the practice field.

JB: Where was the practice field:

JM: At that time it was just south of the stadium, the tennis courts were down there too. The place where I stayed was down there. Me and some friends stayed in an apartment like the house next door to the Dairy Barn. We had to take showers at the Dairy Barn.

JB: They didn't have men's dormitories then, did they?

JM: No, they just had Potter Hall at that time, and the girls occupied that. All males lived off campus. The next year me and a friend stayed down on 14th Avenue. I think we paid \$50 a month rent.

JB: You were on the golf team, right?

JM: No, I wasn't on the team. I did take up golf while I was there, I bought my first set of clubs from a guy named Blackjack, who was a pro down there, and is now up here in Miami.

JB: Do you remember what the population was when you came to Western?

JM: Between 20 and 50,000. When I came sown there was no bypass of any industries.

JB: What were some activities and clubs they had that you were in?

JM: When I attended there wasn't any fraternities. I belonged to the Cherry Country Life Club.

JB: Most of the clubs were connected in with the class weren't they?

JM: Right. And the Cherry Country Life Club was for those in Ag.

JB: What kind of social events did they have?

JM: I remember they only had 2 or 3 big dances a year. They had one before Homecoming. The ROTC always had a military ball.

JM: They always had the dances in the gymnasium.

JB: The gymnasium was the one at the end of the football field wasn't it?

JM: Right. And the swimming pool was on the south end.

JB: The swimming pool was still there when I got there, but it's long gone now.

JM: It was right beside the Industrial Arts Building, and the Home Ec. Building was there too.

JB: What did you do in your free time when you were just goofing off?

JM: When I was a freshman, it was mandatory that you went to the meetings every Wednesday morning, Chapel is what it was. But when you became a sophomore, everyone went to the Goal Post.

JB: You said the enrollment was how many when you attended?

JM: I think there were about 1700. The largest class that I was in was general science. That class was full of people.

JB: I guess most of your classes were required. What classes outside of Science did you take?

JM: I took Psychology, English, Math. There wasn't that much to take outside of what was required.

JB: Did you take penmanship?

JM: There wasn't any penmanship class, but I remember G.G. Craig.

JB: That's what I was getting at. I have heard a lot of people mention his name. Did you have to take any art course?

JM: The only art class I had to take was either shop of manual art. That was required of a major.

JB: Was there any required physical education?

JM: You had to take, Veterans were excused from Physical Education, but we had to take health, everyone else had to take P.E. If you were a Veteran all you had to do was pass the test, and it wasn't necessary to attend class.

JB: Did you have any history courses?

JM: No, I didn't have to take any history. But I knew Dr. Stickles from Chapel. Some of my friends had him for history and they said you really have to know all those dates.

JB: Can you remember any of the programs that you saw at the Chapel assembly?

JM: There were very few auditors that came. I think it just conditioned the freshman at that time.

JB: I remember sometimes they would really have good programs. What were some of the buildings on campus?

JM: Cherry Hall, there were 2 Science Buildings, the Kentucky Building was there.

JB: You wouldn't recognize the campus now. You mentioned Paul Garrett a while ago, what can you tell me about him?

JM: He was a solemn type guy, he wasn't the friendly type at all.

JB: Several people have told me that he had a goal to make it through the year so he could have some money to turn back to the state.

JM: Right. Because they did run a very tight rein back then. Tuition was, for a native, \$50, and \$150 for out of state.

JB: That was for the whole year. What do you remember about registration, and where did they have it?

JM: It was in Cherry Hall, all Veterans had to go to the Veterans Administration office. You had to sign up for classes and then go to each one and get signed up. I think it took me 3 or 4 days to get signed up.

JB: For every class you took, you had to get the card signed by the head of the department.

JM: That's right. In 1953 I had to have a course in Math. So, I took beginners Math to refresh myself. That was the hardest class I had at Western.

JB: That's the way those courses go.

JM: I remember the last year I went to school, I married Phyllis. We lived down at Mrs. Cherry's Complex, across from the practice field. I paid \$35 a month for rent.

JB: And you had a car right?

JM: I had a 1950 Chevrolet. We had been saving our money for that. We were riding in style. When I went to Western I worked at the bottom of the hill, there was a Texaco Station there. I made 50 cents an hour. I worked from 1947 through 1950.

JB: You got to know the professors pretty well didn't you?

JM: Yes, and they all knew me. I think that if you like the professor that you'll try to do better. They did build a new building while I was there.

JB: West Hall?

JM: Yes, that's it. The girls had to be in at 9:30, and it wasn't co-ed then either.

JB: What about the sports? I know you had football, basketball, golf, baseball, was there anything else?

JM: We had tennis. I think we had a ping-pong championship at Western then.

Millard Brown was a very good basketball player.

JB: He died with cancer last year. He taught Agriculture.

JM: I didn't know he came back to Western. Western had a good name in sports, especially in basketball. I met a guy named Slaymaker, who lived with us the first year, and he told me that I was going to see some of the greatest basketball that I had ever seen here at Western. Back then our rivals were Louisville, Tennessee Tech., we also played Murray State. Football season only lasted for about 8 weeks, but we had an alright team. I remember one time I was listening to the radio, and an announcer came on the air and was talking about the game. He said, "He's passing the ball, he's got it, damn he dropped it." He said that right on the air.

JB: That wouldn't have been Bob Procter would it?

JM: Yes, that was him. Something else I remember, on Halloween we would decorate the statue up at Cherry Hall. Do they still do that?

JB: Not as much.

JM: We used to have a great time when it snowed. We would all go down College Street sliding and stuff.

JB: Did you all have a club house:

JM: We wanted one, but we didn't have the money.

JB: What do you remember about Kelly Thompson?

JM: He was a relatively young man when I was at Western. He was kind of like a silent giant.

JB: Did you get to know Kelly?

JM: I didn't get to know him personally. I seen him on campus a lot.

JB: Did you know Mr. Diddle?

JM: Yes, I remember him well. He was a very fine gentleman.

JB: I interviewed Mrs. Diddle not too long ago. And she was telling me how he recruited players.

JM: I remember another teacher and that was Dr. Massey. He said that you should attend every class, because you were paying for it. And also to try and get everything out of the class that you could.

JB: Who were some of the students that were there?

JM: Dottie Nuckols, Grover Downs, Sam Potter, and Dr. Massengale. Those are some that I remember.

JB: Anything else about Kelly Thompson?

JM: I just know that Western expanded when he took over. In 1960 we stopped back in Bowling Green, and we didn't even know the campus.

JB: Are you a member of the Cincinnati Alumni Club?

JM: Yes, I'm a member, but the golf course takes a lot of my time. I would like to come back to Western sometime and just take a tour of the campus.

JB: You said that you knew Lee Robertson.

JM: Yes, I knew him well. He went to school the same time I did.

JB: He taught over in Park City, and also over in McClean County. Are there any big events that stand out in your mind?

JM: I think when they built West Hall that that was a big event. They also built the Student Union Building.

JB: What would you say about a reunion? Maybe select 2 or 3 classes and have a get together before Homecoming.

JM: I think that would be great.

JB: What about graduation when you were at Western? I guess they called every name for people graduating back then didn't they?

JM: Yes, we all lined up and they called each name.

JB: Well, we have about 1700 graduates and you can imagine how long it would take to call each name.

JM: Did they just go up and get their diplomas or what?

JB: They were mailed to them at a later date.

JM: I'm glad I went to Western. I think I picked it because it was a small school. I came up here after I graduated and I'll probably finish up here.

JB: Is there anything else you would like to say?

JM: I appreciate you coming up here, I've really enjoyed it.

JB: I'm glad I did come up here this morning, I would have hated to of missed this. Thank you for your time. I'll turn this off and head home.

END OF INTERVIEW