

DR. JESSIE R. TURK WITH DR. RICHARD HEWITT, ORAL HISTORY

HEWITT: Dr. Jessie Turk, Professor Emerita, Trenton State College. I think I was here when you came in 1949.

TURK: Well, before I talk about that, I want to say this is a very pleasant surprise, having one of my former students, one my favorite former students and former colleague interviewing me. You know, I thought Dick Matthews was going to do it but this is icing on the cake. Now, you said I came in 1949 and that is true but I was part of the state system before that time, you know. I had been teaching at Montclair State College for a couple years as a joint member of the history and the geography departments there and I wasn't sure whether I would be able to stay because this was the time when the veterans were coming back and it was a veterans appointment I had there and Dr. Milstead at Montclair was afraid he wasn't going to be able to keep me and he was in touch with Del Botts, and Del was looking for somebody for the year '49-'50. My predecessor, Catherine Cox who had been here, and she was very successful, but Catherine left and when I arrive I wondered why everybody kept saying, "Are you happy here?" "Would you like to meet some young men?" and I couldn't understand what I was going on, I came here to teach. I found out that Catherine had announced that there were no men here and she was going back into the Navy. The way I got here though, we used to have the state faculty meetings, once a year for one or two days on a weekend. All the faculties of the state colleges would get together and it so happened that year, '48-'49, the state meeting was at Trenton State College. The president of Montclair at that time, E. De Alton Partridge, he was a great outdoor man and square-dance man and so it never would fail anytime we had meetings, everybody had to square-dance. I knew I was going to have an appointment with the president of Trenton State College about the job here and so-

HEWITT: That was Roscoe West?

TURK: Yes. But I didn't know who Roscoe West was. And I went to this square-dance and there was this nice little old man who danced with me and you know he was just such a sweet little old man, he seemed. I nearly died when I found out the next day that he was Roscoe West, the President of the college. And of course I met Del Botts and I was fine with Del because he had checked my record with Milstead and I knew that I was offered a position here.

HEWITT: And he was chairperson?

TURK: Del Botts was Chairperson of the Geography Department at Trenton State and Harley Milstead was Chairperson of Geography at Montclair. After I had signed with Trenton State, President Sprague-- oh no, it was Partridge at Montclair asked me to please stay on because he needed me. I said, "Well, you have to get me out of the contract with Trenton State." Oh no, he couldn't do that but I should break the contract and I said, "No way." And so lo and behold September 1949, here I came. Of course I didn't have a car, I needed find a place to live and Mrs. Botts was very kind. She took me around down to the YWCA on Hanover Street in Trenton. They had no rooms but they had the knowledge of a boarding house nearby and I had the pleasure of living in this old boarding house on Academy Street with Mrs. Antheil. She was the mother of the rather famous composer George Antheil and I met him on several occasions when he would come from Hollywood to visit his mother. And from that place it was a question of how do you get out to the college. Well of course it was by bus. Thank heavens I was young and I could hold books, papers and things and I would go to the bus station. You know though, there were some people who were kind. I remember once in a while, Mr. Berger of the Music Department, he'd pick me up and take me out. And once in a while Charlie Harp, you remember Charlie Harp?

HEWITT: Oh yes, geology.

TURK: Charlie Harp would give me a ride there or Charlie Harp would give me a ride home, which was very nice. Well I get out to the campus and you know sometimes the buses came in, but most of the time they didn't. And I clocked it, I think it's about a half a mile from the road, Pennington Road which had its farms, sheep, cattle, you know, two lane country lane at the time about a half a mile into the place where I was going to do my teaching and that was the library. It was not known as the Roscoe West Library then but it was the library and that's where I met Berenice Casper who was going to be my colleague. We had an office in what would be an overgrown closet on the second floor there. It was Berenice and Del and I and you know as time went on, Berenice became probably my very best friend at the campus. It's a whole story of Berenice and I but maybe I ought to talk about the students and what it was like coming here. The majors were delightful, the courses were not too big. We had the introductory course that everyone in the department taught and the security, you wouldn't believe it, Dick. Examinations at the end of the year were two hours long. All tests we combined together to make up a really good stiff test for the freshmen who took it and all exams were counted carefully and locked up in what was like a big safe in Del Botts's office, you know there'd be total security. When I think

of some of the slap-bang things that have happened since that time you know it's kind of distressful. But I was impressed with the students, they seemed awfully friendly especially when I would be walking through the woods near Bliss Hall. I love the May apples in the spring, the woodlands, the violets that made that walk worthwhile. But there were always these little girls running around in little black caps with black and gold and they were being so nice to me I couldn't understand it. I didn't realize I was being rushed by the Gamma Sigma sorority. They were looking for a new advisor and unbeknownst to me, students who were members of the commuters club at Montclair that I had sponsored there knew girls from Gamma and they told them I was coming, they should look for me, and they did. And it was a very happy relationship I had with Gamma for many years. Some of it was a little hairy. I remember I had to be the chaperone for what was called the Harvest Moon Ball. It wasn't the first year but it wasn't long after, imagine my horror when I went into the gymnasium that the girls had decorated and I found a real live heifer in there carefully munching on green apples. They walked it in by the end of the night, what a job for getting him out. Fortunately for me I had an escort that night who had been on one of the Eagles' farm teams. His name shall be silent forever but he supervised the removing of this animal from the gymnasium at that time.

HEWITT: Did you ever find out how the animal got in there?

TURK: Yes, they walked it in. It had not been eating the apples; fortunately they put a tarp under it you know, in case. It was a very scenic situation you know, Harvest Moon Ball and so forth. I also was responsible as sponsor of that sorority to be the chaperone because we had chaperones in those days of what was called the block dances for many years. And you know, I'm not a praying woman, but I prayed quite a bit every time before that block dance because the only person that I could be sure would be on campus on a Saturday night would be the night watchman, one person, and me. And of course they had invited the young men from Princeton, Rutgers, Rider to come because this wasn't necessarily a couples' dance. It was open to the whole campus and the community. You never knew who was going to wander in and who was going to wander out. When I think now that security is composed of a whole police force, you know, with night sticks and walkie-talkies, it's amazing that things didn't happen at that particular time.

HEWITT: It seems to me that you were always involved with faculty rights, women's rights, and wasn't there an incident about smoking?

TURK: Oh God, Dick. You know, at Montclair one of my good friends was the dean of women there and she was a chain smoker as I was, and mind you, I'm not bragging about having been a chain smoker. But we used to in the basement of Montclair was you know no fire hazard, we used to go there with the students and have our cigarettes and go on about our business and I never thought about anything when I came to Trenton State. So when I would walk from the bus to the campus I would usually have a cigarette in the morning before going into the building and between classes I would come out and have a cigarette and what I didn't realize that there was a sort of double standard on this campus. While everybody knew that female faculty and students smoked, it was a kind of unwritten rule that they never smoked in public. Now this was 1949 but I was not aware of this. Well, my colleague Berenice Casper never said anything to me. Later on I found out that everybody was all over Berenice's back that she should speak to me and I should not smoke. And she said, "It's not my business." Then the next thing I knew, Del Botts called me and he was kind of-- and I said, "What's the matter, Dr. Botts?" But I had been getting little remarks in the faculty dining room and you know Dick, I never smoked where no one else was smoking. But, if any male, faculty or student, was smoking and I wanted a cigarette, I felt I had a right to have one and I did. You know, I wasn't about to set the place on fire but I was sort of hooked on cigarettes. Well Del said, "Well, you know, they've never done it here," I said "Well I feel very strongly about this. If the male students and the male faculty have the right to smoke, then I have a right to smoke." And Del said "Well do you feel strongly about that?" I said, "I feel very strongly about that, it's a principle." He said, "Well then you stick to it, stick to it." Next thing I know, I got a summons. The president of the college would like to see me, Roscoe West. So I went to old Rox's office. Roscoe, he was a benevolent dictator, that's the best way I can describe him. He was fair, he had his pets and I never was one of them, but basically he was fair. So I went to his office and "Oh, Miss Turk, Miss Turk, sit down sit down sit down, hmm, I don't know how to go about this." I said "Maybe I can help you Dr. West, is it about my smoking?" "Well now that you mention it, yes!" he said. I said, "Well Dr. West, this is how I feel about it." He said, "You know, it's not a law but you know women have never smoked here and surely you wouldn't want to break a tradition." I said, "On the contrary, I feel that I should have the rights of the male faculty and students, certainly." "Well, well, well, it would be better, maybe you could smoke in your office where nobody will see you?" I said, "I'm sorry Dr. West but this is how it is." Well at that time I expected I would never spend more than another semester at Trenton State College. Well lo and behold, it wasn't more than a couple of

days, who comes wandering into my classes but Roscoe West, and he sat right down in the back of the room. And I put on a performance and my students worked with me very nicely and I think it was one of the best lessons I've ever taught in my life I don't remember what it was. And old Roscoe later on said, "Fine lesson Miss Turk, fine lesson Miss Turk." And off he went and never said another word about it. So I went on blithely doing my smoking, the only female on this campus. You would go in to the women's room, the students would be smoking they'd quick - into the toilet. And then say, "Oh, it's Miss Turk, it's alright." And I used to say to them, "Look, if you think you're doing something wrong, stop it. If you don't think you're doing anything wrong, quit hiding." It bothered me so much, you'd go on the campus, a girl and a fellow would be walking together, they'd look around, they'd get behind a tree and she'd take a drag on his cigarette. To me, this was false. Well, it started to break down about two years later. There was another one of these faculty meetings on campus. No students were around and I was walking on the road with Dorothy Barton, loved her greatly from the English Department, and Dotty said, "Boy, I'd sure love to have a cigarette." I said, "So why don't you?" "Well by golly, I will." So she had a cigarette that day but she didn't follow through later. We had a room up in Green Hall which was a female faculty room; there was a male faculty room there too. The males had Marilyn Monroe's picture on the wall I heard. The females had, after she retired, Olivia Coffin's, her last will and testament for the faculty there. So women were allowed to smoke there and I'd quite often go there for my cigarettes. But the one who really broke it after me when we'd go to faculty meetings in the lunch, I never lighted up unless somebody else was smoking but if they were and I wanted a cigarette, I had it. It was Mary Virginia Gaver from the library who one day politely pulls out her cigarettes and she joined me. And little by little, the whole thing dissolved. I know for a fact, Dick, that not one student smoked because I was smoking, they were all smoking before. It was a question of being open about it and equal rights—and I don't have to tell you, you were a student of mine—that I don't want superior rights, I'm affirmative action, I'm in favor of people getting jobs but I'm not in favor of any privilege for women but I certainly have always been an equal righter from the time I was a kid and I stick to it.

HEWITT: You've always been involved in faculty governance.

TURK: Yeah.

HEWITT: How about your experiences with the New Jersey State College Faculty Association?

TURK: Ah, yes.

HEWITT: And the Faculty Senate here.

TURK: You know, the Faculty Association, there was a Faculty Association here when I came; exactly when it started on campus I don't know. There was one at Montclair too when I was there, all these state colleges had them at that time. The state faculty-- each had its Faculty Association and then we were joined together in the State Faculty Association and we were affiliated with the NJEA. I think it was, at the time when the faculties were first organizing, the only organization around outside of them that would have possible AAUP and there was no AAUP chapter on any of these campuses at that time, was the New Jersey Education Association and we affiliated with them. And the fact that this was a teacher education institution, it made a natural bridge to New Jersey Education Association because at that time all our students would become teachers. With my mouth, I found myself active in the association and for many years, right up until the time that the union came in, for many years not in the beginning but toward the end I was the representative from Trenton State College for the State Faculty Association. We met at the various colleges frequently and before the state education department was divided, there was lot of activity. There was particular activity around when Edwin Martin was president and then especially when Warren Hill came in. I have a lot of respect for Warren Hill; I was sorry that he wasn't able to stay longer but he must have seen some of the handwriting on the wall from the state colleges. But we used to go, I know I was on the committee that, we talked about for instance the moonlighting clause and I can remember carrying the ball on that one. The presidents of the colleges, particularly Tom Robinson from Glassboro felt that you know the faculty were sort of chattel and I kept saying, "They have rights." And the idea was that one was not supposed to work anywhere except the college where they were unless they had special permission from the president and my statement was that you know, what the faculty does with its own time is its own business. The only concern of the presidents is if the faculty person is not doing his or her job, then the faculty person needs to be so told and possibly sacked. "Well if they got tenure, you can't sack them." And I said, "On the contrary, anyone can be sacked if you have just cause and are willing to go through it." So we struggled on that one, I'll take part of the credit for the fact that while I didn't win that battle, I did succeed in getting the wording of what was called the moonlighting clause changed. The faculty people were supposed to inform their department chairpersons if they were gainfully employed outside of the college. They were not supposed to ask permission but

were supposed to inform them. Then, if the department chairperson or president felt that the faculty person's outside activity was interfering with their teaching and research and so forth, then they were supposed to tell them so. And we didn't get beyond that; that was the famous moonlighting clause we got through. That's not how it came out originally.

HEWITT: Speaking about getting higher degrees and research and so on, what was that like with release time?

TURK: When I got mine, no release time, Richard. You know, you did your own thing, no way. In fact, there were no sabbatical leaves at all. Now that you mention it, I will take personal credit for two things that faculty should thank me for. Of course it's been changed since then. One pertains to sabbatical leaves and the other is load because as a member of the State Faculty you know representative from here, the State Faculty knew I had a big mouth and I was fearless. Marie Kumin of Montclair, Marie just retired there, she had been a student at the time I was a student at Montclair many years ago. Kumin and I were selected by the State Faculty Association to deal with Commissioner Raubinger and Assistant Commissioner Morrison and the faculty, the presidents representative Tom Robinson from Glassboro who was very strong to deal with questions of possible sabbatical leaves for faculty. The state department and the presidents weren't so sure that we could afford this and we felt we certainly could and we should. And Marie and I, we worked a long time one semester and finally we pushed it through with them and got them to concede. I think they were sensing that the department was going to be broken up and I think that's why they finally gave in but we succeeded in getting the following thing, I don't know what it is now, but we succeeded in getting the right of the faculty after seven years for one semester at full pay or one year at half pay and there were a certain number allotted to each college and that was the sabbatical leave policy at that time. This was before 1966 when Dungan came in but we got that through. I myself had to take a leave of absence for a year to finish up, to work on, you know to have a year residence at Columbia and to do work on my dissertation, the groundwork research et cetera that I had to do at a number of places. And that year I had no pay. I was not permitted to have my insurance and I had to pay for my own hospitalization at that particular time. But later on, that's why I worked so hard to get sabbaticals later on. The other thing was kind of a finesse Richard, when I first came here, the faculty load was fifteen hours. All over the country it was a seven hour load for faculty, but we had fifteen. I remember at one of the State Faculty Association meetings getting up and proposing that one of the things

we work for be a twelve hour load. You know, I wasn't going to go whole hog, but a twelve hour load for faculty with not more than three preparations. At that time, a member of the then Kean College faculty, Don Richael(?) seconded the motion, fine. This was around the 1950s with this happened. Well after Chancellor Dungan came in, by a fluke, Don Richael ended up being one of the assistants to Chancellor Dungan and I was on that committee that worked on the personnel policies board, changes in the personnel policies of the state college faculties and Dungan had Richael working on it from the chancellor's point of view. It was then, well I pulled a finesse one day, and I said, "Don, do you remember you seconded my motion back in fifty-eight, for the twelve hour load?" And he said, "Well," he said "I don't know, if the chancellor will look over." And I said, "But you seconded my motion, how can you work against it?" And by God there were a lot of things we didn't get but we got the twelve hour load that year and I personally will take a lot of credit for that for having a good mind remembering and finessing it. So that was one of the fun things. I was on the committee too, State Faculty Association. Somebody came up with the bright idea that we should have year-round colleges without thinking it through. You know this was one of these administrative deals that would come out. New people going in downtown, they come up with new ideas without thinking them through with the standpoint of the economics of it, the utilization of the plants, et cetera. Now we had summer school and that was perfectly alright, you know but it was sort of voluntary on the part of the faculty whether they were going to teach or not in the summer, provided there were enough courses for them to teach. But someone got the bright idea you could move the students through more rapidly if you have stuff going around. They forgot that if you have a major, if you're going to do this then you've got to have practically everything and letting the students choose, two or three semesters, some would be on two some would be on three, but they forgot that you've got to have more courses and more faculty and more hours and how do you clean up. But it took the State Faculty Association, and I worked on that committee, there was a document that came out called the year-round college in where we did surveys over the country, we checked it out and we came up with the recommendation that it was not a good idea. Well, the state, after they realized the economics of it, they bought it and did not get the year-round college then.

HEWITT: Let me ask you one question relative to the students. In 1968, the students dedicated the yearbook to you.

TURK: Oh, that was, yeah-

HEWITT: And in 1969 you were named by the students as one of the five best teaching professors on this campus.

TURK: Yeah, you know this was very nice, it was really was. It was a total surprise to me, I'm not quite sure how it came about but it did. But the students—and you know it was the pictures, I see them here, I know all these pictures; a student took this one, this one was taken in room seven in the basement of the library and somebody had put forth a question to me and I was mulling it over. It was kind of a philosophical thing I think it was in Latin America as it was at the time. These other pictures here were taken by Art Steinman, but of course I'd know Art well and he often ate in the faculty dining room when I did, this was before Art was married. And I don't know why, he was always shooting pictures all over the place and I didn't know anything about it. This was, I really enjoyed this because when the students think you're doing something right, it's kind of gratifying.

HEWITT: What differences were there between the students when you came and when you left?

TURK: You know, Dick...

HEWITT: How do you see that?

TURK: Dick, you know now I hear about the great increasing standards at Trenton State College, you know, and we've been recognized in Money Magazine and this that and the other thing. And I think back and I say, you know, somebody has forgotten some history. Myself, I know when I started at Montclair State years ago and the state colleges they were thought of over a time Montclair number one, Trenton number two, probably Newark State with is Kean number three and then it was kind of grab bags, Paterson, Jersey City, Glassboro; with Glassboro usually on the bottom. Now you're a graduate of Trenton State, you know this was pretty much how it was understood in the state. The number of students that tried to get into these state colleges compared to the number that could be taken at these colleges were very small. It was highly selective at the time. My own class at Montclair, there were something like twenty-one hundred students and you had to, at the time, to get into these state colleges, you had to at least be in the upper quarter of your class. You had to pass high enough on the college boards but in addition you had to take a state college examination, you had to go through an oral presentation to make sure you had no speech impediments et cetera or else you couldn't get in. They looked you over health-wise. I knew somebody who was almost kicked out of Montclair because they carried too much weight at that time and you had to write, you had to write a whole essay in your

major department right at the college before they would entertain your entering the college. So these colleges were extremely selective for a long time. And of course, at the time when I went back to teach at Montclair and when I came here to Trenton State, we had a number of veterans here. They were not, you know they were not duds. These were intelligent people, mature people who came back and we still had the cream of the crop for those going into teacher education. Remember at that time, Dick, there were not so many jobs open for women. We had a higher proportion of female students and the things that females could do at that time professionally, you could be, unless you were the Rockefellers or what have you, you had to go to-- these state colleges were about the only thing you had, most of us couldn't afford to go to what was NJC which is now Douglass College, and Rutgers wasn't all that great. In fact, the Rutgers Geography Department, Rutgers leads in geography and it was the faculty at Trenton State who helped Rutgers get its Geography Department off the ground. Andy Clark and you know some of them you got--

HEWITT: Guido Varga.

TURK: Guido, yes, Guido, yeah.

HEWITT: Your old pal.

T: I was at the Twentieth International Geographic Congress in London with Guido, that's another story. And John Brush, you know. They were just starting out and Trenton State was the center of geographic education at the particular time. And it was really tops in elementary education without a doubt. So the students were really good students at the time. Now, I will say in the late sixties and in the seventies, there was kind of a pressure. I know myself, the head of the department at that time, it wasn't Bernice then, when John was head of the department, several times he said to me, you know, I shouldn't be grading so hard. Several time Wade Curry would mention to me, "You know, couldn't you ease up a little bit?" I had students who would come in in the seventies for an elective and coming in and leaving saying, "Oh, I was looking for an easy three." I said, "Well I don't teach easy threes." You know? So it was-- the students were not bad students, no question about it, but there was a whole different attitude. There was not the commitment. The old school, there was a big commitment, even if somebody came to get an education and didn't want to be a teacher, which many did, they wanted a college education desperately. They would get caught up in it and they felt the mission. You know, the old fashioned a real mission to society, to education, to students and I think this is a good thing. I still have that in the community where I am, I do believe in it. So there

was a, you know, there was the upset. I often wonder to what extent do colleges help shape the culture, et cetera and to what extent are colleges the reflection of what is going on out there, and more often than not I think it's the reflection of what's going on out there. One thing that grieves me is, I'm not panning administrations, particularly on the state level you know, I don't expect people to be super persons. It's nice if they're intelligent and if they think ahead once in a while, but sometimes, they're very short-sighted in what they do to these colleges. My feeling is that any college, get what is your best size, whatever it is for you plan, what you can afford, get the best students you can and a college gets the best students it can, any college does that. But if it has a good faculty, if it has good morale, and faculty morale is extremely important. I don't know whether I mentioned it before or not but I used to go around to the presidents jokingly and the deans too and say to them, "You know, you really work for me." And they would kind of look at me and they would kind of look at me like what's this snot talking about and I would say, "Because after all the purpose of the institution is the teaching and learning, to teach the students, to help them become educated persons and also to be able to have a career or a job or something like that," I said, "you know, we could go back to the log if we have to, with the teacher and the student. We really don't need administration unless the administration can make it possible for the teachers to better teach and the students to better learn in this institution." And when you crack faculty morale, you've got yourself a peck of trouble as some past presidents have happened to know.

HEWITT: That's some interesting—

TURK: Now, goldbrickers, they talk about goldbrickers, most faculty here over the years have not been goldbrickers. There are some who have done more, there are some who have done less, but the important thing as a faculty person is not look around and see what the other guy's doing, do your thing. That's what I did, I did my thing and I think I was a pretty good teacher, you know.

HEWITT: We had some interesting people to say the least. Did you run into the now Governor Jim Florio? Are there any that stand out in your mind?

TURK: There are so many and you'll excuse the old gal, she gets forgetful et cetera. There were many interesting people I met here. Truthfully, I love Trenton State College very much because of not only the plant, the beautiful plant, the wonderful students over time and the great faculty; colorful, faculty coming and going and the stabilizing force throughout many of them. With regard to the

students, there were many students who were interesting. Yes, Jim Florio was a major in the then combined Social Studies Department. You know, geography was separate, geography was merged, geography would be separated out again. Now geography is practically disappearing through poor management as far as I am concerned because now with the need for more geography in the country, the need for more international understanding, et cetera, the fact that political geography and some of the other geographies, regional geographies, that we're putting out people, educated people who don't know the first thing about the earth. To me this is really a sin and there was such a good Geography Department here and it has been cut and cut because of short-sightedness. You need a body, you know the big thing is business administration so you take everything from everybody else and you shove faculty there instead of maintaining, alright so you enlarge a little bit but everybody in the world can't be accounting majors. For a while it was with nursing, they were pushing everybody in nursing, I understand now they want to take nursing out. This is short-sighted as far as I'm concerned. But as far as students, we had, you know Jim Florio and he was a good student he was president of his student class, very bright student there, and you give him credit. I said the other day I'm very proud of Jim Florio. I would vote for him again and he's been very fair. He's managed to alienate practically everybody in New Jersey but that's fair, you know? A classmate of Jim's, I see her rather frequently now her that's Barbara Coukla(?), she was a journalism-English major but she was a student of mine also in the introductory course here, and Barbara, she's the editor of the Newark portion of the Star Ledger and I run into her at meetings in Newark quite frequently. Bill Cook. Now Bill Cook was an English major but you know, at your time, Dick, we had combined majors; history-English and history-geography but the history majors and the history-geography people, they took geography courses which makes sense because, what kind of a historian are you if you don't know the geographic point of view? You know, to place things in their functioning hole. Bill Cook, I heard from him not long ago, he was very bright, he was one of our early black students who was extremely brilliant, had a lot of fun with Bill and he wrote to me recently he has his doctorate, he's at Dartmouth now and he's heading up a whole national conference on creative writing. So it was nice that he found it and he sent me this brochure and at Christmas time I got a picture of him, he acted in a play, he was King Lear in a play and so I have this picture of Bill in that particular thing. We had, you know one of the things that really pleased me, Dick, Jack Hughes himself.

HEWITT: Yes.

TURK: He was a senior the year I came to Trenton State and Jack and I had political-- he had political geography with me and I was so proud at that time when Jack was the one who discovered the silos in Cuba because he worked for the intelligence- map portion of intelligence at that time and he discovered the silos in Cuba. You know I saw Jack a couple years ago at the alumni day; I come back quite frequently for alumni day because I do enjoy seeing former students, and Jack--I was so flattered, Dick.

HEWITT: He was on national television at that time, wasn't he?

TURK: Yes he was, definitely. But he said to me, he said, "You know, your political geography course gave me part of the foundation for some of the things that I did." And that made me feel awfully good.

HEWITT: Quite a compliment.

TURK: And you know, many former students for instance, Jenny Simonsen who graduated here, elementary major, I'm still in touch with her, she's a principal now in Tappahannock, Virginia. She got her doctors degree from Rutgers. Charlie Good, he was a geography major, I don't know which college he's teaching in now but he's in one of the leading geography departments in the country. Hugh, what was Hugh's name? He taught at the University of Maryland, he went on to Clark University, he was a geography major here. So many. Abe Resnick was not a student of mine but Abe, he was a graduate of Trenton State, he graduated right before I came, he I believe still is teaching at Jersey City State and for a long time he headed up the New Jersey Council for Geographic Education. You know, over time with geography, it was such a pleasure to work with Del Botts and Berenice Casper and Berenice was extremely well-known across the country. Her experience, her education at Nebraska, most of it she had there but she taught at the University of Missouri, she had taught at the Wharton School, University of Pennsylvania, she had studied at McGill, and she spent a lot of time in Washington with a lot of the government geographers and I got to meet all of them through her. Berenice and I, Berenice, you couldn't top Berenice in arranging fieldtrips of any sort.

HEWITT: That's right.

TURK: Her Lancaster trips, her trips around New Jersey, et cetera with the students.

HEWITT: Her air flights.

TURK: Her air flights yes, the air flights over New Jersey. And also, on spring weekend, she would give up her time and many times I would

go with her. Once in a while in addition to me, Hope Jackman or Dorothy Ferguson would go and we would take students from her anglo class and we would go on a trip to Boston, New England or to Washington, D.C. or to Pittsburgh. You know, these trips she would take, I would go along, we did it a part of our, you know we were supposed to be on vacation but this is what we did because we wanted to give the students all the opportunities we possibly could and Berenice, she could figure that out to the mile, the minute, the hour, the accommodations and making up the dossier of the topography, the economy, a little the history, et cetera, background. These trips were just great and I enjoyed them very much going along with her I learned a lot from Berenice. Berenice and I, because as I say, we started sharing an office, but we became not only colleagues but good friends. We went to conventions together. There was no money for faculty for going to conventions. I didn't get a dime until almost the sixties for any kind of conventions but on my own with my meager of things, I felt it was something that you wanted to do and you needed to do. And we would go to the National Council for Geographic Education conventions and to the Associations of American Geographers conventions and then go on fieldtrips there which helped see the area et cetera. We went to Atlanta, we went to Seattle, we were, you know, all over. We did that together and it was fun. When Betty Strasser came, then there were the three of us. Before Betty came, Berenice and I were known as, when Del Botts was here, as the "Bottsy twins". The faculty used to refer to us as "Bottsy twins" you know, so that was a fine thing. I miss Berenice very much because after she retired of course we still kept in touch when she moved from Ewingville Road. The place that she went she had lived on campus then she took a year's leave of absence, that's when I met somebody very interesting too. Prior to Berenice taking off in 1958 of course, '58-'59, we were so active that the American Association of Geographers had some monies to hire leading geographers and we put in for this and we got Mumsami B. Naidoo to come here. He was an Indian who had been reared in-

HEWITT: South Africa.

TURK: Natal, Durban, Natal. And he came for a couple of months. That was the year when to show his appreciation when he had to leave, he put on a curry party and we were all interested. The women on campus helped him with it and we had a curry party and I went to it. I went home that night and the next day I looked in the mirror and I said, "I look funny" so I went to my landlord who was a doctor and he said, "You look funny to me too, what are you eating?" I said, "I had curry last night." He said, "Oh, that's probably it." Curry had nothing to do with it; I was the one faculty member on the campus who came down

with measles. That was it. Well when Bernice took off in '58-'59 we were successful in getting Mumsami Naidoo back for that year and I took of in '61-'62, Naidoo came back for that year. So he had two years here and that. And you know, his philosophy was amazing and it was through Mumsami that I learned a great deal about the African Nation congress because he had been a member of it and about the things of South Africa. It was important to me from that standpoint of geo-political information and cultural information. Unfortunately, Mumsami and his wife Monicum both have passed away. His son, I think he teaches at the women's school of economics now but this is somebody I knew there.

HEWITT: It is true that one time when he went back home he found that his lands had been confiscated?

TURK: Oh yeah, definitely, oh definitely. He had to just go out, the lands had been taken over, the Indians no longer could live in that area and so he had to sell. But the idea was you bought nothing, everybody knew the Indians had moved they got nothing and they had to move out and start over again. I learned a great deal from Mumsami.

HEWITT: Speaking of curry, I understand that one of your main interests on campus was food.

TURK: Oh, yes. That's one of my main interests. Domestic, I am not you see, it's sort of against my religion to cook, I can burn water while I boil it. I feel, Dick, the food situation on campus was important from a social and an educational standpoint. When I first came of course there was the Old Inn as it was called. The porch was for faculty dining the rest of it, it stood where the parking lot is next to Forcina Hall today near where Brown Bungalow is, I could mention that later. When the new building, Phelps Hall was built in 1955, I was part of a parade that picked up a chair from the Old Inn because the new furniture had not arrived and we marched from the Old Inn to Phelps Hall with the chairs and put them in for the students and for the faculty, the whole college enterprise there. And so I customarily ate my meals in the faculty dining room, we had good service and we ate the same things that the students had, you didn't have too much choice but you ate it. But you could sit down with people from different departments and there was a flow of ideas and I could hear things about new things in math or what's going in on psychology. There were a group of us young faculty who ate there evenings when it was still under the college auspices and that's when I got to know Franz Geierhaas and Roger McKinney and Jane McLaughlin and Art Steinman and Nancy Shriver and Mrs. Briggs who was house mother at Allen House, you now and it was almost like a family. It

was good. When they stopped then, then of course I was out on my time. But I think a faculty dining room is extremely important, there should be good-- because it makes for more wholeness among the faculty. There's a flow of ideas that are important. When I heard that Phelps Hall was being torn down I could've cried. You know, as a joke my last meeting at the Faculty Senate because I had been on the Constituent Assembly that set up the Faculty Senate and I served there for about thirteen years before I retired in 1982. I started to say something about Phelps Hall there being torn down. This is really a shame for the college if you don't have a place where faculty can get together because this is important for the faculty morale.

HEWITT: We only have a couple minutes left, but could you talk about the types of facilities that you served in, starting with the library?

TURK: Oh, well starting with the library, we had an overgrown closet, Berenice and I and two rooms, two old fashioned rooms but they were kind of adequate but it would have been nice if there were screens and then that continued we moved over the Brown Bungalow on the first floor. Berenice and I and then later on Betty Strasser and then later when you came and you were upstairs. Then from there we moved over to the relocatables. They were a couple of temporary buildings there and you were constantly running across the campus back and forth; I was very happy when my office went there as well as teaching in those rooms. They were pretty good at least you could get some air, you could open a window. After that it's like we circled the whole campus and came back to Forcina Hall. Among the people I enjoyed of all the administrators the one I think I had the greatest respect for was Jim Forcina, I had good rapport with him as well. The facilities were adequate, you know you made do with them they could be improved, I didn't like the air in Forcina Hall. There was something I didn't mention. You know, Berenice Casper and I were instrumental in Clayt Brower becoming the interim president after Heussler was bounced from this campus. We served on that committee and we fought tooth and nail to put him in there and I think if we hadn't managed to get him in as interim president, Clayt might not have ended up being president of the institution. I don't know if he knows that or not but I know the ingoing there and Berenice and I really connived. There were other possibilities but we made sure we got the best of whatever was possible at the time. So that's one of the things there. And now you want to know what I'm doing now?

HEWITT: Yes.

TURK: Ha! Believe me, I don't know when I had time for a career. I went back to my native town of Newark, New Jersey, and all of you said

"You'll get killed if you go there." And I said, "You can get killed anywhere." And what I'm doing there is I'm fulfilling three promises I made: one, I've always been interested in urban geography and political geography and what better place to study politics and urban deterioration than Newark, New Jersey. Secondly, I've always been interested in equality and integration and I say that as long as I'm in Newark, Newark will be integrated. Pretty soon I won't be the only one in Newark who is not of the African or Asiatic or Hispanic race. The third thing I said, "I've been pretty straight," I was going to become a hedonist and I'm trying very hard to do that. I head up a block association right now that runs for several blocks from Eighteenth Avenue to South Orange Avenue, I am member by virtue of that of the Vailsburg Block Association Council. I've been their recording director for a number of years. I'm serving as a member of the board of directors of the Unified Vailsburg Services Organization. We are responsible for Meals on Wheels, congregate eating for seniors, after school tutorials, we're trying to open up a new childcare center, we had to move from our old one. I go to the mini station with the police; I am on now the Essex County prosecutor's subcommittee on outreach for trying to improve relationships between the police and the public. And on and on and on, I have no time for anything. For fun, I got to Paper Mill Playhouse, I miss McCarter Theatre, I go on bus trips with the triple A with my cousin. I don't want to get very far, I'm making a mess here, that's against my rules. I don't want to get too far from my cardiologist because I had open heart surgery a couple years ago, but on the whole, life is good. Teaching was wonderful for all those years but there's a time to every purpose under heaven and there's a time not to teach. It was for personal reasons with the family that I took an early retirement and in reflection I did the right thing at the right time and I hope that - you know, I love this college, I used to say that I was going to buy land in the middle of Quimby's Prairie and be buried there so I could keep my eyes on everybody, but it's changed so I don't think I'll be buried here.

HEWITT: Dr. Jessie Turk, we miss you.

TURK: Oh well you're sweet.

HEWITT: And we love you very much and Trenton State, believe me, is not the same without you.

TURK: Is it possible for me to give you a kiss on this thing?

HEWITT: Yes.

TURK: Let's do that. Take care, Dick.