

FRED T. PREGGER WITH JUDSON J. FINK, ORAL HISTORY

FINK: Welcome to the Trenton State College oral history series. I'm Judson Fink of the Physics Department at Trenton State and today I'm talking with Dr. Fred Pregger, Professor Emeritus of Physics from Trenton State. Dr. Pregger was at the college for thirty-three years. He came in its centennial year in 1955 and just retired in 1988 and he served with distinction for many years as the chairman of the department as well. Dr. Pregger, welcome.

PREGGER: Thank you, pleasure to be here.

FINK: Good to have you. I understand that before you came to Trenton State College you were at West Orange High School as a high school physics teacher, is that correct?

PREGGER: Right, taught there three years.

FINK: And before that?

PREGGER: Before that I taught four years in Wayne Township Junior and Senior High School in north Jersey.

FINK: I see, and you came to Trenton State College you were hired by Dr. Victor Crowell, also Professor Emeritus and also Roscoe West was President.

PREGGER: Roscoe West was president.

FINK: That was president number one.

PREGGER: Right.

FINK: While you were here. And what were your duties as you were hired?

PREGGER: Okay, I was hired as an Assistant Professor of Science. In those days the Physics Department was not separate from the Science Department, it was all one. And I was hired as assistant professor; my duties were to teach physics, physical science and audio-visual aids.

FINK: Audio-visual aids at that time entailed what responsibilities?

PREGGER: Well, there were a couple of courses that I had to deal with mainly for, well everyone was an education major in those days, but for elementary teachers primarily. And dealing with the equipment,

handling the equipment which was nowhere near what it is today---a couple of sixteen millimeter projectors, opaque projectors, slide projectors, that sort of thing, couple of tape recorders. And making sure that the equipment was in order and operating over in Kendall Hall for the weekly assembly programs which were held there every Tuesday afternoon.

FINK: Oh, that's interesting. And it was a requirement to be there?

PREGGER: Requirement. Everyone had assigned seats.

FINK: Students had assigned seats?

PREGGER: Students had assigned seats.

FINK: Faculty had to be there as well?

PREGGER: Faculty had to be there, everyone had to be there every Tuesday afternoon at I guess it was one fifty in the afternoon for an hour and there would be speakers and occasionally an entertainment type thing but primarily speakers and demonstrations and that sort of thing.

FINK: Were you also in charge of the movie projector over there?

PREGGER: I was.

FINK: That must have been an experience.

PREGGER: That was an experience. At least I learned how to operate an art projector, which was kind of interesting. Of course I had student workers to help.

FINK: To carry the equipment around.

PREGGER: To actually do most of the work.

FINK: So you had audio equipment and some visual equipment but no television.

PREGGER: No television.

FINK: No, good. Well that sounds like an interesting thing and I see you have brought with you today your schedule from 1955.

PREGGER: Yeah, looking through some records that I had I turned up my first schedule from 1955 and when I compare it with the way things are today, it's quite a difference. For one thing, the workload was fifteen hours, instead of I guess it's twelve today. And I looked through my schedule because I had some lab courses and that sort of

thing. My contact hours were either seventeen or eighteen on here, I think it's eighteen.

FINK: That was because of laboratory work?

PREGGER: Because of laboratory work and so on; so there were eighteen contact hours stretched over Monday through Saturday because we had Saturday classes.

FINK: Right and in addition I see there were some other things besides classes that you had.

PREGGER: Yeah, in addition there was this assembly bit on Tuesdays.

FINK: That was big for you too because you had the media bit.

PREGGER: Yeah, had the media. So I actually had to be here six days. And that was kind of par for the course in those days. Actually they tried to schedule for five days. They tried to give you one free day in there and I still recall Mr. West as president looking at my schedule somewhere around the end of the first quarter and discovering that I had to come in on Tuesday which had been set up as a free day for me because of operating the assembly and he was very, very helpful with that he said you know, "That's not right," he said, "You got to have a free day." And he apologized for giving me the six day week.

FINK: But you still had it.

PREGGER: I still had it for that term.

FINK: I see it was a quarter term.

PREGGER: Yeah, it was a quarter but he saw to it that I didn't have that again. And that was kind of nice because at that time, the beginning of that year I was still living in Kearny, New Jersey, and I was commuting from Kearny.

FINK: Every day?

PREGGER: Every day. It was quite a haul.

FINK: What were your duties during the extracurricular periods that the students had?

PREGGER: Didn't have any specific duties, as I recall I didn't operate any extracurricular activity at the point, at the moment, or at the time I should say. We did have one interesting thing though I believe it was in the Tuesday afternoon, the Schoolman's Bowling League operated.

FINK: Schoolman's?

PREGGER: Schoolman's. It was a bowling league set up among all the schools and colleges in the greater Trenton area. Rider was involved, Trenton Junior, the high schools, Hamilton, so on and so on. And there were teams of faculty members from all of these schools.

FINK: And you were on one?

PREGGER: I joined it because I always liked bowling. I joined the Trenton State team and President West was a member and he was an avid bowler, he loved bowling. So absolutely nothing, nothing interfered with afternoon bowling.

FINK: That's on Tuesday. That was sacred.

PREGGER: I believe it was on Tuesday and that was sacred.

FINK: Who are the other faculty members that were on the team, do you recall?

PREGGER: I can recall some of them, yeah. Bill Hausdoerffer.

FINK: Another Professor Emeritus in mathematics.

PREGGER: Another Professor Emeritus in math, right. Mike Kline.

FINK: Director Emeritus probably.

PREGGER: Right. Art Parks who was a professor of history.

FINK: Right.

PREGGER: Let me think, I can't recall everybody, Warren Nutt.

FINK: Who replaced you in the media.

PREGGER: Who replaced me in the media. And, oh, two-three others I can't remember exactly who now.

FINK: How well did you do?

PREGGER: Oh yeah, John McElroy.

FINK: Oh, John. Right. Everybody is now retired.

PREGGER: Everybody's retired.

FINK: And how well did you do?

PREGGER: We did fairly well.

FINK: Brought home the trophies for good old Trenton.

PREGGER: We brought home a few trophies.

FINK: For Trenton State Teacher's College at that time, right?

PREGGER: Right, Trenton State Teacher's College. I remember one year we brought home the trophy for high game of the year. Which was pretty good, I think everybody but one was over two hundred that game.

FINK: Wow, that's very good. And that was the sacred time in your schedule on Tuesday afternoon because the president was part of the team, I see.

PREGGER: Yeah.

FINK: Good. Well, I have a little diagram of the campus back, this is from 1980 so it's really not very old, I couldn't get one way, way back. Perhaps you could take us in the front entrance and tell us what buildings were here back in '55 when you first arrived on campus. There was a perimeter road.

PREGGER: There was a perimeter road.

FINK: I don't think it was Metzger Drive at that time.

PREGGER: I think you said it was Lake Road.

FINK: I think it was Lake Road and across the way was Lake Boulevard. Lake Boulevard still exists on the other side of Lake Ceva. This is Perimeter Road or some fancy name like that and the entrance came in--

PREGGER: The entrance came in near where the little information booth is now, the old gate, brick gate is still there.

FINK: I see.

PREGGER: It still stands; of course, it's been grassed over. So the entrance to the campus was there and going around the campus toward Lake Ceva, the first building really that you came to, or the first set of buildings were around the quadrangle with Green Hall in the middle.

FINK: Right.

PREGGER: And on the right hand side as you face away from Lake Ceva on the right hand side was Kendall, the auditorium.

FINK: Still there.

PREGGER: And on the left hand side was the library which is now the Roscoe West Library.

FINK: Right, but no wing to it.

PREGGER: But no wing to it, no the wing came later.

FINK: Just the original part.

PREGGER: Right. And directly in back of Green Hall was the old gym before the new gym was added.

FINK: Like half of Packer.

PREGGER: Half of Packer. When I came, Centen-Phelps, rather, which has just been torn down, Phelps was just opened the year I came. And this is kind of interesting because Phelps opened the year I came and closed the year I left. I don't know whether that's significant or not.

FINK: Well, thirty-three years for Phelps too.

PREGGER: Thirty-three, yeah, right. And Phelps then became the dining hall and activities center and so forth. And then in back of Phelps were a group of older small buildings which was the headquarters of the Industrial Arts Department, I don't know what they called it at that time but it was a group of buildings which then later became the student center, the hub, and then I guess later was torn down.

FINK: Right, they were all little temporary buildings, almost like garages, weren't they?

PREGGER: Yeah, the first was, the shops really were, they looked like garages and I suspect maybe back in the old days they were when the racing stables and so on were out here. But then the temporary buildings were but up after that. Then, if we come back down to Lake Ceva and continue around the perimeter road, we come to Centennial which again opened up the year that I came. And of course it was called Centennial because it opened up in the centennial year which we talked about presently. Oh yeah, I forgot a couple things before we get to Centennial. Along where Forcina is now and also where the math, Holman...

FINK: Holman.

PREGGER: ...Hall, is now, were several houses. One of which was the president's house.

FINK: Right, he was right where Holman is, by the lake.

PREGGER: He was right where, somewhere yeah, right in there and there were a couple of other houses in there. And over where the parking lot is beyond Forcina was the Inn, the Old Inn.

FINK: The Old Inn.

PREGGER: The Old Inn which was a dining hall when I first came in.

FINK: And did you eat there?

PREGGER: Yeah, I ate there for the first couple months before they opened Phelps.

FINK: Oh great, I've heard lots of things about that place.

PREGGER: Yeah, it was a very nice place to eat it was very, very warm and cozy. Kind of rustic on the inside.

FINK: And that was from the original racetrack?

PREGGER: From the original racetrack/amusement sort of area that this was at one time. And then there was some, across from the Old Inn down near where the overflow is from Lake Ceva, in that general area where the parking lot is and so on, there were some World War II barracks where I guess it was married students and some faculty lived.

FINK: Right.

PREGGER: Then as we continue on around towards Lake Sylva beyond Centennial, the dorm complexes.

FINK: Ely is the first one.

PREGGER: Ely...

FINK: Then Allen.

PREGGER: Allen, Brewster, that complex.

FINK: Brewster and Norsworthy was the last one.

PREGGER: And then Norsworthy was the last one. I guess it was Allen House, the middle one, used to be-- that was a very interesting place. Again, it was a very warm and cozy, homey type atmosphere in the living room downstairs. I can still remember it had grandfather clock that chimed and I determined as a result of listening to that to get a grandfather clock, which I did at one time.

FINK: That was the Allen drawing room.

PREGGER: That was the Allen drawing room.

FINK: And we had our faculty meetings there.

PREGGER: Right, and we had our faculty meetings in there.

FINK: Great place.

PREGGER: Yeah.

FINK: That was awesome. They'd opened up the doors onto the lake, the view and the breeze would come in.

PREGGER: Yeah, and we had faculty meetings pretty regularly.

FINK: Yes, very regularly.

PREGGER: Very regularly.

FINK: Further down towards the power house?

PREGGER: Further down, of course the power house was there, it's been modernized since but obviously there was a power house. And beyond that--

FINK: Was there an entrance at Green Lane at that time, do you remember?

PREGGER: I can't remember whether there was an entrance there or not. I sort of don't think so but I'm not sure. I'm not sure.

FINK: I can't remember either.

PREGGER: I know the woods back there and there were picnic areas back in the woods.

FINK: And the old Green House was there.

PREGGER: The old Green House was back in there somewhere.

FINK: Yeah, it's listed here too right on the loop. That's still there.

PREGGER: And oh, I almost forgot coming up the other way where the Business Department is, the Business School.

FINK: Bliss.

PREGGER: Bliss. Bliss was a men's dorm.

FINK: That was a men's dormitory, right?



PREGGER: That was men's dormitory.

FINK: Dr. Hausdoerffer lived there at that time?

PREGGER: Right, I think. Yeah, at that time, he was Dean of Men. I believe he lived there. I don't know whether he lived there then or had just left there but he had been in there.

FINK: Yeah, that's about it. All the rest has come in those thirty-three years.

PREGGER: All the rest has come since, right. The campus in those thirty-three years--

FINK: And some have gone.

PREGGER: Yeah some have come, some have gone.

FINK: Like Phelps Hall.

PREGGER: Yeah.

FINK: And the Old Inn.

PREGGER: Of course Dean Field was there.

FINK: Right, Dean Field, yes that's true. The football field.

PREGGER: Now on the way out I guess. Yeah, it was the football field.

FINK: Good, well thank you for letting us know what was here. Oh, was the chapel here when you came?

PREGGER: The chapel, yes. The Alumni Chapel was just finished sometime during that centennial year; it was under construction when I first came.

FINK: Well thank you for the little quick tour and it's pretty easy now. Now if you were to go around and show all the buildings you'd be here for hours.

PREGGER: Oh yeah, that's for sure.

FINK: What were the students' schedules like compared with the schedules they have today.

PREGGER: Okay, they were quite different. Number one, of course, we had a six day week.

FINK: Students had, in some cases six days even though faculty were trying to--

PREGGER: Yes indeed, and there were no options really. Students' schedules were determined by their majors. So that the students actually, a major group, and of course everyone was an education major really, everyone as preparing to be a teacher. So the student schedules were handed down.

FINK: As a package.

PREGGER: As a package. So if you had, let's say, junior science majors, they went to every class together, they even had class captain. Yeah, this was a person who was designated to take care of any details of whatever, I don't know. But there was a class captain.

FINK: And he sort of followed the whole group around each time? To all of the classes?

PREGGER: Yeah, everyone went together. Everyone-- All the classes--

FINK: Lockstep.

PREGGER: Lockstep. It was very, very, definitely a lockstep kind of schedule. With a few, you know a few electives at the upper level but particularly freshmen and sophomores there were just no electives.

FINK: It was all fixed up for you beforehand.

PREGGER: It was all fixed up for you.

FINK: And what was their curriculum like compared with, you know, physics majors now, chemistry majors, biology majors, math majors and so on?

PREGGER: Okay, well, the curriculum was, in the sciences, the curriculum was designed, of course, to make a person a science teacher.

FINK: Right.

PREGGER: And even to this day, the state of New Jersey does not certify a physics teacher or a chemistry teacher, they certify a comprehensive science teacher, a biological science teacher or a physical science teacher. And I think there was also an earth science certificate which we never have given. So a science major would take a certain amount of work in all sciences so that they would meet state certification to teach any science. In those days it was in grades I believe seven to twelve, if I'm not mistaken--five to twelve, one or the other. Therefore they took-- everyone took general physics, everyone took general biology, everyone took general chemistry and so

on. And somewhere along the line they did differentiate it at the upper level, I guess probably about the junior level they did differentiate somewhat and they could specialize a little bit in biology or a little bit in the physical sciences. They could take a couple of advanced courses in these. But, in no case did they come out with a degree that would qualify them as a physics degree or a chemistry degree. But they did make pretty darn good teachers and they had a very broad background with significant depth. You know, it wasn't a trivial kind of thing, it was significant depth but it was not the kind of depth that would take you into a PhD program at a university.

FINK: I see. Cou--

PREGGER: Excuse me one--

FINK: Oh, sure sure, go ahead.

PREGGER: They all, as I said, they all then took things like practice teaching and junior practicum and things of this sort as I say, within a lockstep kind of schedule.

FINK: Right. Could you tell us a little bit about what courses you taught over the years? Start back in 1955 when you first came when you probably did just about everything at that time and then right up until the present time.

PREGGER: Right. Again, in those days the faculty was pretty small and the number of students was pretty small, so.

FINK: Roughly how many students were there about?

PREGGER: It seems to me I recall something like eight hundred and fifty, nine hundred students in the college.

FINK: Total?

PREGGER: Total.

FINK: They were all sorts of majors?

PREGGER: All sorts of majors.

FINK: All undergraduate?

PREGGER: All undergraduate. Well, there may have been a few extension courses; I don't think we had a graduate program in those days. But, yeah, the eight hundred and fifty or so would be undergraduate

students and there was something like eighty to eighty five faculty members.

FINK: Really small. Everybody knew everybody.

PREGGER: Everybody knew everybody and one of the things about Trenton State that really appealed to me when I came down here was that it was a very friendly place. Like you say, everybody knew everybody.

FINK: And we all ate at Phelps.

PREGGER: All ate at Phelps, all ate together, the faculty ate together. You just knew everyone. Of course, as the college got bigger and bigger and bigger, you lost some of that. There are a lot of gains but that's one of the things I think that we lost. But getting back to what you were saying, I'm sorry I interrupted you there.

FINK: What were some of the courses?

PREGGER: Some of the courses okay. As I said, Jud, I happened to find my first schedule the other day.

FINK: What do you have on that first one?

PREGGER: The first one, well I had a physics course for sophomore and junior science majors. The class was small in those days so they combined the sophomore and juniors for general physics. So I did general physics for them. I had a course in physics for the industrial arts majors. Now, the industrial arts majors took a different physics course from the one that the science majors took.

FINK: I see.

PREGGER: Presumably and I tried to, it was geared toward the needs of industrial arts majors.

FINK: And these were all to become industrial arts teachers.

PREGGER: All industrial arts teachers, right. Then I had another physics course for music majors.

FINK: Physics for music majors.

PREGGER: Physics for music majors.

FINK: That was different, I think.

PREGGER: That was different. It was called physics of sound, all we did was we studied sound, physics of sounds. Lots of demonstrations

and that sort of thing, so we had that. Then I also had two courses in visual aids. One for--

FINK: That's your fourth preparation by the way.

PREGGER: Yeah, right.

FINK: Two sections of it?

PREGGER: I can't remember whether it was two sections or one but it was I know four hours' worth, it was probably a lab-type thing. But this was for senior elementary majors and you could tell who was in the class because each group had a number. Elementary was number one. So when I look at my schedule and I see "senior one" that means senior elementary majors.

FINK: Okay.

PREGGER: Okay, and junior fifteen were the industrial arts majors. So one and so on. Then, I also had a late afternoon, four thirty afternoon course on Monday, audio-visual aids for extension students.

FINK: That's your fifth preparation.

PREGGER: That was my fifth preparation.

FINK: Plus you had the media to be covered and you commuted from Kearny?

PREGGER: Commuted from Kearny.

FINK: Six days a week?

PREGGER: Six days a week.

FINK: Well that sounds like it kept you out of trouble.

PREGGER: Out of trouble is right.

FINK: That's great. You also mentioned to me before we went on the air that when you first came here the college had their own bus driver.

PREGGER: Yes, Bill Akers.

FINK: And we had our own bus too?

PREGGER: We had our own bus, it was called Miss Hillwood.

FINK: Miss Hillwood?

PREGGER: Miss Hillwood. Don't ask me where the name came from but that's what it was, Miss Hillwood. It was an old beat up school bus.

FINK: And what did they use that for? Teams?

PREGGER: They used it for field trips.

FINK: Oh, field trips.

PREGGER: Mainly field trips, I think the teams like football team which didn't win too many games in those days, I think the football team probably had chartered buses.

FINK: I see.

PREGGER: But when we would go on a field trip I would take--. I taught a lot of different courses.

FINK: Yes.

PREGGER: In the time I've been here I've taught physical science for elementary school teachers and I even taught a course in chemistry a couple times for nurses and all sorts of things. But I would take my students on field trips and we would get Miss Hillwood, we'd sign up for it and Bill Akers would drive us here there and the other place and we'd make it. It rattled away and so on but it got there.

FINK: Got there and back.

PREGGER: Yeah.

FINK: I think that was gone by the time I got here in 1958.

PREGGER: I don't know just when.

FINK: Yeah, I think Bill Akers had retired by that time, too. He's the Bill Akers by the way of Aker's Corner on the maps up in Hopewell.

PREGGER: Yeah I know, that family right. That's an old family.

FINK: Good. Could you tell us a bit about the administrative structure of Trenton State way back in the fifties or early-mid fifties?

PREGGER: Yeah I can. I can tell you some about it; it was pretty small for starters. We did not have a large number of administrators when I came here the real prime movers I guess were Mr. West, Roscoe West who was the President of the college and the Dean was Bertha Lawrence.

FINK: She was dean of everything?

PREGGER: She was dean of everything.

FINK: Men and women?

PREGGER: Men and wom-- well, dean of, I guess dean of the college.

FINK: I see.

PREGGER: And then there was a dean of men and a dean of women.

FINK: I see.

PREGGER: I think Bill Hausdoerffer just left that position and Mike Travers was Dean of Men as I recall when I was here. Mike Travers, now deceased, was for a long time also magistrate up in Hopewell township. But that's another story, that's an interesting one. But at any rate...

FINK: He was also chairman of the Business Department.

PREGGER: He was chairman of the Business Department. He was tough. And the Dean of Women was Vernetta Decker. For whom Decker Hall is named.

FINK: Right.

PREGGER: And there were a few other administrators around, Miss Jackman, Hope Jackman was involved in the administration of the college. But that was, you know, primarily--. Oh yeah, the business manager, John Quimby.

FINK: Quimby from Quimby's Prairie?

PREGGER: Quimby's prairie.

FINK: Was it after him or his family before him?

PREGGER: No it was after him.

FINK: Oh I see.

PREGGER: Yeah.

FINK: Because Quimby's Prairie was here as long as I was here and I was wondering.

PREGGER: Yeah well I think John Quimby was here about ninety-four years.

FINK: The first hundred.

PREGGER: Yeah. Quimby's Prairie, it was interesting in those days because Quimby's Prairie was sacred.

FINK: Yes.

PREGGER: No one walked on Quimby's Prairie. The two diagonal crosswalks were not there. It was just a complete rectangle in grass and absolutely no one walked on Quimby's Prairie except at one time.

FINK: And that was?

PREGGER: That was at the end of the junior year, in the springtime at the end of school in the springtime, there was a ceremony that took place, it was called step singing. It was kind of a nice thing. A lot of people gathered around to watch a so on. Where the—you have to remember these were small classes—where the senior class would mass on the steps of Kendall Hall and the junior class would mass on the steps of the library.

FINK: There were steps down the front at that time.

PREGGER: There were steps down the front, in both cases.

FINK: They're a little different now.

PREGGER: As the evening progressed, there was a songfest where each group sang songs back and forth and so on and at a certain time the seniors would, in a sense give way to the juniors. The seniors would be leaving the college, the juniors would become seniors. So at that time the junior class would light candles and they would then march across Quimby's Prairie. That's the only time you walked on Quimby's Prairie, they would march across Quimby's Prairie to join the seniors over on Kendall and you know that would signify that they were now becoming seniors.

FINK: That's great. That sounds like a nice ceremony.

PREGGER: It was a very nice ceremony.

FINK: Great, very good. Talking about Green Hall and Quimby's Prairie, when I came to Trenton State, three years after you came, I came to your office and it was upstairs in Green Hall.

PREGGER: Right.

FINK: And if I remember correctly, the upstairs of Green Hall was pretty much sciences and business. The whole Business Department and



the whole Science Department was on the second floor of Green and administrative offices were like on the first floor.

PREGGER: I believe so, yeah, that's true.

FINK: And the Art Department and a few other departments in the basement.

PREGGER: In the basement, right.

FINK: Right, so things really have changed.

PREGGER: Yes. That office we had there was interesting too, we called it the door to the attic when I was in that office.

FINK: Right, that's right.

PREGGER: That was an interesting attic in Green Hall.

FINK: It was, besides be full of junk when we were there, a lot of physics junk; I remember some owls taking up residence in the clock tower.

PREGGER: Yup.

FINK: And they had a family of small barn owls, I guess they were and they ended up one morning, one Monday morning on a window sill of one of the rooms on the second floor of Green Hall and the mother was out looking for food or something I don't know, anyway she didn't know where they were and the class was in there watching these three little owls look in at the class until the mother found out where they were and scurried them away. But it was really an interesting place up there. Pigeons and owls.

PREGGER: Pigeons and owls and Lord knows what else. Well I always remember of course that I think it was Mr. Treuting that had the boa constrictor.

FINK: Right, yes.

PREGGER: And every now and then the boa constrictor would escape and then we'd have to search the attic and all the nooks and crannies and all to find the boa constrictor.

FINK: And that was a big one.

PREGGER: Yeah.

FINK: That was Bo-Bo the boa and every once in a while they'd throw a chicken or something in there for him. Well let's talk about

something, let's talk about the blue ribbon committee that established a different method for higher education control in the state of New Jersey and that was back in the mid-sixties or something?

PREGGER: Somewhere, sixty-somewhere in the mid-sixties I forget the exact year. But of course again when you and I came here there was no Department of Higher Education in the state of New Jersey and the state teachers colleges, which is what we were, we were Trenton State Teachers College, the state teachers colleges were under the jurisdiction of the State Department of Education and the Commissioner of Education was the big boss of the whole system and so it was the same systems the public schools, the elementary schools and the high schools and so on. Well, in the middle sixties, this was changed and the Department of Higher Education came into being. So we went from having the Commissioner of Education as boss to a Chancellor of Higher Education. At the same time we began to make the change from being a teachers college to being a multipurpose institution, of course as you know today. Teacher education is still part of Trenton State as it is the other state colleges but it is not the major part anymore. Well that transition was in many respects painful. It was a challenging time. It was an interesting time and many, many changes did take place but I can still recall that the chancellor, the first Chancellor of Higher Education, Ralph Dungan, came in and one of the first things that was done was to appoint some blue ribbon committees to study the offerings of the state colleges to see whether the state colleges were suitable, or suited I should say to offering degree programs in the major disciplines.

FINK: I see.

PREGGER: And so we felt since we'd been hiring good people and so on, we felt in the Science Department that we were ready to go into a department physics and chemistry and biology and offer majors in the those fields. Well, this blue ribbon committee who I think was presided over by the head of Bell Labs if I'm not mistaken but there were some very, very powerful scientific people on the committee. I believe Arnold Penzias was a member of that committee; he's a Nobel Prize winner in physics and also former trustee of the college. Studied the, at that time there were six state college, Ramapo and Stockton hadn't been formed yet. Studied the six state colleges to see whether the science departments were equipped and ready to offer the majors in the field. And I think much to the surprise of some people in the Trenton offices downtown, the Chancellor's office; they declared that Trenton State was ready to go on in physics that we had hired some people who were very eminently qualified to give a major in physics and we were ready with some financial help from the state and

some equipment and some additional staff and so on to offer a major in physics and were kind of given, the committee said yeah, go to it, gave the green light. I think we and Montclair were the two that were designated. So. And it's kind of interesting because I was at the State Board of Higher Education meeting where the report was read and I don't think some of the powers that be much cared for because it was buried; it was never heard from again.

FINK: But it was read into the record.

PREGGER: It was read into the record and, of course, we did go on and we did get some funding.

FINK: There were other majors at that time?

PREGGER: Oh, yeah there were other majors.

FINK: They could give at that time.

PREGGER: Yeah, history and English and so forth; we were in good shape.

FINK: Good. I know that you were grand marshal for a long time, how many years was it you were grand marshal?

PREGGER: I don't recall exactly, probably ten or twelve, something in that order.

FINK: And this meant that you presided over the commencement exercise each year.

PREGGER: Right.

FINK: And for those many years, do you have any notable people who came to speak at our commencements during those times?

PREGGER: Yes, I remember one year we had Isaac Asimov.

FINK: Science fiction.

PREGGER: Science fiction fame, and three hundred and some-odd books fame, Isaac Asimov. It was kind of interesting because at that time, one of our Physics Department was Milton Rothman, Dr. Milton Rothman, who had turned out was an old friend of Isaac Asimov from back in the days when Milt Rothman did science fiction. He used to write a significant amount of science fiction himself and they were part of the same association and so forth. So it was kind of old home week.

FINK: Good.

PREGGER: So we had Asimov here and we had some very interesting commencements. That was always an interesting problem too, is it going to rain or isn't it? Do we have it outdoors or not?

FINK: Can you remember any in particular where it did rain?

PREGGER: I remember one in particular; we had Sam Proctor from Rutgers who came down and the commencement was going on and the sky was getting blacker and blacker and blacker and it came time for Proctor to give his commencement address and he got up on the podium and he looked at the sky and he said, he said, "A long time ago I learned something about giving a speech," and he said something to the effect of you tell what you're going to tell them, you tell them, and then you tell them what you've told them. He said, "Well here's what I'm going to tell you," and he said it in about two sentences, and "Here's what I'm telling you and here's what I told you," and he said, "I think it's time to head for shelter." And he got the biggest round of applause I think of any commencement speaker that I ever saw.

FINK: And we all marched out.

PREGGER: We all marched out and we beat the rain.

FINK: Great. You were here under seven different presidents. You came under Roscoe West and you left under Harold Eickhoff.

PREGGER: Right.

FINK: I'd like to just go down that list and have you make a comment, if you would about one or more of them.

PREGGER: Okay.

FINK: First of all, Roscoe West, the one who hired you.

PREGGER: Alright, Roscoe West, yes he was president for a long time before I came. I think he became president somewhere in the late twenties, in fact it was when the college was still downtown, still in the middle of Trenton, and at that time I think he was principal.

FINK: He was called principal

PREGGER: Called principal of the, it was the Normal School.

FINK: Principal of the Normal School.

PREGGER: Principal of the Normal School. And by the way, just an aside there, when I first came here of course, everybody said oh you're down at State Teachers and so on; a few people said oh you're

down at the Normal school. People still used to talk about the Normal School.

FINK: And now it's Teachers--

PREGGER: Yeah, for years after we became Trenton State College the local people, the old timers around still talked about State Teachers. I haven't heard it for quite a while now but it takes a long time to change images of that sort. Anyway, Rox West was a very, very interesting character. Actually, I got along with I think all the presidents pretty well but I liked Dr. West very much. He was kind of a benevolent dictator; he ran a tight ship.

FINK: This was before times of faculty senates and unions.

PREGGER: Oh yeah, there was no such thing as a faculty senate, really the president and the dean and the department chairman really pretty much made policy at the college in those days. It was a very, you know, it was a pyramid kind of thing. But there was very little faculty input except, you know there were committees and that sort of thing, but no real power in the faculty. But we got along pretty well.

FINK: Good, how about Edward Martin. Edwin Martin.

PREGGER: Okay, yeah, Edwin, yeah Ed Martin came in when Dr. West retired. Let me just digress again one second, when Dr. West retired, he was a New Englander and he went back up to New England and for a number of years after that I would see him at Cape Cod. He had a house in Harwich in Cape Cod and we used to go up and visit him occasionally up there. So he was a bona-fide New Englander when it came right down to it. But, Ed Martin, Ed Martin came in and began to make some significant changes. One of the changes that Ed made was people walking on Quimby's Prairie because he used to cut right straight across it. But he first began to break that down.

FINK: Right, he lived on campus.

PREGGER: He lived on campus.

FINK: Where Holman Hall at the end of Holman Hall, the lake end of Holman Hall was in one of the old homes that remained and he used to walk directly out the center?

PREGGER: Out the center door of...

FINK: Green?

PREGGER: Green Hall right across Quimby's Prairie.

FINK: And he had a little path worn there.

PREGGER: Had a little path worn there, so he was there for a number of years and—

FINK: He was my first president, incidentally. And Warren Hill was next.

PREGGER: Warren Hill was next; he was only here a couple of years I guess. Warren Hill was again a very interesting person. Came from Maine, I believe, and was kind of a hail fellow well met, he was a very likeable sort of a person and he began to make, again, it's an evolutionary process going from a small teachers college kind of thing into the large multi-purpose institution that we are today. But Warren Hill began to get, I think, began to get more faculty involvement in things.

FINK: Right, I know I was on-- it was the first committees I was put on.

PREGGER: Yeah. And it was about then I know that I became president of the Faculty Association in those days. That was before the Senate and so forth and I became president I guess just about the time Warren Hill left but we were beginning to make some inroads into in a sense negotiations and a little bit more faculty input than we had in the old days.

FINK: Right. Things on contracts and things like that.

PREGGER: Right, yeah.

FINK: Next one was Robert Heussler.

PREGGER: Okay.

FINK: These were trying times for the students, too.

PREGGER: They were trying times. Yeah, they were trying times.

FINK: What was that, the sixties?

PREGGER: That was somewhere, yeah that was in the late sixties, somewhere in there I forget the exact dates on that one.

FINK: He was the first one incidentally who was elected--

PREGGER: No, I beg your pardon that was not next. Virgil Gillenwater.

FINK: Oh, okay.

PREGGER: We forgot after Warren Hill-

FINK: Okay, was Virgil Gillenwater

PREGGER: Was Virgil Gillenwater.

FINK: Okay, I'm talking of Heussler, right.

PREGGER: Yeah, and Dr. Gillenwater came from Arizona, Northern Arizona University. He was president, I believe, two years. And in fact it was the two years that I was president with the Faculty Association so I got to work with him quite a bit. And again, a very likeable sort of a person but he left after two years.

FINK: Is that all he was here? Just two years?

PREGGER: Yeah, I think, yeah just two years. He went back to Northern Arizona; back to actually the same job he had when he left there which was academic vice president of Northern Arizona University. But he apparently and Ralph Dungan, the Chancellor, just did not see eye to eye at all and, you know, I can sympathize with him.

FINK: Right, I can understand that, too. Their personalities were very different.

PREGGER: Yeah, personalities were very, very different.

FINK: Then we had the first one elected by the college Board of Trustees.

PREGGER: College Board of Trustees.

FINK: That was Robert Heussler.

PREGGER: That was Robert Heussler.

FINK: And students were in a state of flux at that time as well as the faculty.

PREGGER: Yeah, right, that was the sixties. That was a time of activity and that was a very, very trying time for Trenton State College.

FINK: It was, both administratively and academically.

PREGGER: Academically and everything else. That's about the time we had buildings being burned down and all kinds of students activists

operating. I can remember one night being on fire guard all night long.

FINK: Is that right?

PREGGER: In Crowell Hall. Yup. We took turns and just sat in the building.

FINK: Protect the building.

PREGGER: Protect the building, turn the alarm in if necessary or what have you. So Heussler left after two years and that's the whole story in itself.

FINK: Then Clayt Brower came in.

PREGGER: Right, then Dr. Brower, Clayton Brower, came in. Clayton was a member of our faculty in the Education Department, in fact I believe he was Dean of Education and he was the person who did a lot of the mediating work between the faculty and the board of trustees at the time of the Heussler affair and when Dr. Heussler left, then the board hired Clayt as the President. Dr. Brower was President for quite a number of years, about ten years there about. He really, I think, really got the college back together again, calmed things down and began to make some significant moves. In fact, he was the person I believe he and of course the board responsible for the beginning to, the beginning of upgrading the SAT scores, the admission scores. Taking a chance on losing state funding by limiting admissions and thereby building the ability level of the students at the college and I think it was a good move.

FINK: It was a good move.

PREGGER: It was a good move on his part.

FINK: That was one of the biggest things. That was one thing that I could actually understand that he was doing.

PREGGER: Right.

FINK: And last but not least we have Harold Eickhoff.

PREGGER: Harold Eickhoff.

FINK: Number seven.

PREGGER: Number seven, right. And that's getting, you know, very modern and very up to date.



FINK: He continued the program?

PREGGER: He continued the program and built on it and of course began to really I think garner nationwide publicity and so on for the college as a result of this.

FINK: We certainly have enjoyed a lot of publicity.

PREGGER: Oh, yes.

FINK: Especially under Dr. Eickhoff. Are there any other points that you'd like to make before we close?

PREGGER: Well, yeah I'd like to reiterate a couple of things really. One is that the development of the college has been evolutionary of course, no one person has been responsible for everything that takes place and I think that's typical of universities and colleges. I think we've gained a great deal over the years in terms of prestige, in terms of, and justly so. I think our students are exceedingly good, I think that our courses are better and better as we go along. But I also think that we have over the years turned out many, many, many good teachers and one of the real pleasures that I have in going around the state—because I'm still active in the associations, the teachers associations, the science groups and that sort of thing—is a huge number of former students at Trenton State College that are good science teachers, people that I have known for years that I've hopefully helped trained and you know they're doing fine jobs. We turned out a lot of really good teachers. One of the things, if I may editorialize a little bit, one of the things that concerns me right now is the fact that certainly in the physical sciences in particular, chemistry and physics, we're not turning out teachers anything like we did in the old days. And it's not just us, all over the state there just aren't any being trained and that really has me concerned. The other thing I want to again reiterate is the business of how warm and friendly this campus was when I came here and really still is. It's a very, very, very nice place to work. It was a great place to have a career and I enjoyed every minute of it.

FINK: Good. Well, thank you Dr. Pregger. We've been talking with Dr. Pregger, faculty member here at Trenton State for thirty-three years, grand marshal for twelve years, physics chairman for twelve years, outstanding science service award from the New Jersey Science Teachers Association and in the words of Tom Brokaw who has said at each of his last three commencement addresses to graduating baccalaureate members all around the country, Duke for one, I know I heard it there, he said, "It's easy to make a buck but it's hard to make a difference." Dr. Pregger, I know you've made a difference here at Trenton State and

we all thank you for that. And I'd like to thank you for your candid discussion today and your insights on Trenton State College over the last thirty-three years and for those of you who are watching, we both thank you, Dr. Pregger and I, thank you.

PREGGER: Thanks.