

DR. ROBERT G. THROWER WITH DR. PAUL DUBOIS, ORAL HISTORY

DUBOIS: I'm Paul DuBois, Director of the Trenton State College library, this is part of our living history series and today it's our distinct pleasure to have with us Dr. Robert Thrower, the Dean of the School of Technology. Bob, it's a great pleasure to have you here today.

THROWER: Well it's my pleasure to be here and looking forward to sharing some thoughts of the last quarter of a century here at Trenton State College.

DUBOIS: Well I think we've got a lot to talk about. As I was thinking about how I wanted to introduce this, Bob, I think one of the themes that came to my mind was Buckeyes and Tar Heels and the reason for that is that I've noticed over the years when this college has a tough job to be done, they often go out to Ohio to get somebody to do it. They did that with the library and nursing and continuing studies and of course they did it with technology and I thought we might begin by maybe you telling us a little bit about your background in North Carolina and Ohio and a little bit about your growing up years and then we'll go on to how you happened to arrive at Trenton State.

THROWER: Very good, Paul. As anyone will tell very quickly by my accent that I am from somewhere in the South and I was born and spent most of my childhood days in the state of North Carolina. But I would quickly hasten that I don't have a true deep South accent and the reason for that is that from the ages of about eight to twelve, my family lived in Baltimore, Maryland, and I picked up that Baltimore brogue and when I moved back to North Carolina, I never did completely revert to a true southern accent. So, in the South they say I have a Yankee accent but I'm sure that's not the case. But, I did grow up in North Carolina and then upon completion of high school there in eastern North Carolina, after a short tour of duty in the U.S. Navy right at the end of World War Two, I attended North Carolina State University where I received my Bachelor of Science degree in 1950 in industrial arts education. And from there I started teaching public schools in North Carolina and I taught for two years in the little town of Reidsville, North Carolina near Greensboro and at the end of the two years, Uncle Sam pointed his finger at me again and says, "I want you" again, so I was called back and this time I went into the army for two years and spent that two years actually in South Carolina at Fort Jackson where I used my education degree and actually was a trainer for two years in the army. So it was an interesting

experience that added to my teaching background. After coming back out of the army in 1954 I again returned to North Carolina and started teaching in the high school in Charlotte, North Carolina and taught there for four years. At the end of that time I had-- during that period of time at least, I had started and completed a master's degree in industrial arts at North Carolina State University. At that time I was interested in going on for the doctorate and to stay in education and I had the opportunity to go to Ohio State University.

DUBOIS: I knew that we were going to get around to Ohio here eventually, Bob, now this is where the story gets good.

THROWER: This is where the story gets good. I had the distinct opportunity of having a three year what they call an instructorship, like a graduate assistantship only you taught a full schedule at the university as an instructor then took graduate work at the same time. So, during that three years I taught classes primarily in elementary school industrial arts and then completed my PhD there in 1961.

DUBOIS: Well we're getting kind of at another one of those transition points, Bob, in your career so let me jump in here and just say parenthetically that when Bob and I were talking about this interview today, he noticed that on my outline I put down Buckeyes and Tar Heels and he didn't want any mistaking of the Tar Heels for the Wolfpack of North Carolina State, so I want to make sure that's very clear at the beginning that I'm using Tar Heels in the generic sense of referring to the state of North Carolina. I also want to just add a couple things to the introductory remarks, Bob that I made about you. I of course came to the college in '72 and over the years I've had a chance to work with a good many academic directors and deans and I really can't think of anybody, with the possible exception of Phil Ollio, that's been more fun to work with, Bob, over the years. It's been a real pleasure and that was one of the reasons why I persuaded Dick to let me do this interview today even though I know--

THROWER: I wonder what he had to pay you.

DUBOIS: No, he didn't have to pay me a thing. In fact I know there are many people at the college, of course, who know you better but I was genuinely looking forward to this. Now, we left you at Ohio State, you had gotten that doctorate degree and I'm going to be interested now in hearing what the circumstances were of your coming to Trenton State, was there a transition job in between? What is the chronology there, Bob?

THROWER: Yes, there was a intervening period but it is interesting to start from the experience at Ohio State because that's where my first

acquaintance of Trenton State College occurred. I think it was either the first or second year while I was at Ohio State, along in the early part of December, three gentlemen appeared one afternoon in the department there and it happened to be Bob Worthington, Dr. Robert Worthington who was the chairman of the department here at Trenton State at that time.

DUBOIS: And a person by the way that I think you've done an interview of-

THROWER: Yes I had the opportunity-

DUBOIS: For our living history series.

THROWER: Yes I had the pleasure-

DUBOIS: Things are coming full circle here, okay.

THROWER: Yeah, I had the pleasure of doing the interview with Bob just a few weeks ago and along with Bob that evening was Dr. Rutherford Lockette and Professor Vincent Dresser and the three of them were on their way to AVA convention in Chicago, I believe it was, and they had with them a big roll of blueprints and what we discovered they stopped over and they wanted to pick the brains of the people at Ohio State concerning a set of plans for a complete new building that they were planning to build here at Trenton State College which ultimately became Armstrong Hall here on campus. A couple of our professors and several of us graduate students that evening spent the entire evening sitting around a big table going over the plans, discussing what the hopes and dreams were of the people here at Trenton State at that time for the program and it made a very distinct impression on me. I was very taken by the professional attitude of the three people and the ambitions and goals that they had set for themselves here at the college. I kind of took that away in my mind as that sounds like an exciting place to work. So, during the following year or two at each of the national conventions I had the opportunity to talk with Bob and Rudy and some of the others and continued the acquaintance. Then in the spring of nineteen eighty-- sixty-one, 1961 when I was finishing up at Ohio State I had a call from Bob and they had a job opening here and asked me if I was interested and obviously I said I was. But then, before I had the opportunity to come out for the interview, Bob called me back and says, "Sorry but the state has cut the faculty lines," and so..

DUBOIS: Oh my, they've used that line a few times over the years.

THROWER: Yes, we've experienced that so the job was not available at that time. So, I had another offer from the college at Oswego, New York part of the SUNY system and it offered me the opportunity to go there and teach in my specialty which was elementary school industrial arts and so I went there for two years and then in the spring of 1963 I had another phone call from Bob Worthington and he said, "The line is solid now and are you still interested?" It happened to occur about the time that we were getting ready for the national industrial arts convention and that year it was in Indianapolis I believe it was. So I said, "Well, let's talk when we get to the convention next week." So we did and as a follow up on that I came to campus on Easter Monday for an interview so that was my first acquaintance with actually appearing on campus. So, came for the interview and at that time the program was still housed in the old temporary barracks over where the Hub is now.

DUBOIS: And what was the program called at that time?

THROWER: At that time it was the Department of Industrial Arts.

DUBOIS: Right.

THROWER: And they were in the process of the building that we had reviewed the plans of two years earlier was just about finished and actually the move into Armstrong Hall took place in the summer of 1963.

DUBOIS: So when you arrived at the college, who was president then, who actually did the hiring?

THROWER: Okay, the president at that time that I talked with was Ed Martin, President Ed Martin, and also talked with the Dean of the Faculty James Forcina. So Ed and Jim talked very favorably about the position and the college and so we came to an agreement that I would join the faculty and they helped to ease the transition, they offered me the opportunity of coming in the summer of 1963 and starting by teaching in summer school. At that time we had a rather large summer program and to help in the transition the college had a couple of houses that sat out on Pennington Road. Actually, Mason house and Gerke house were about where the parking lot is for the School of Business now, that little lot there.

DUBOIS: Right.

THROWER: So they said, you and your wife can have a room in Mason house to live in for the six weeks of summer school which will give you an opportunity to shop around for permanent housing. So, we

arrived on campus in June of '63 and spent the summer in Martin house and taught classes during the morning and house hunted in the afternoon.

DUBOIS: Right. Bob, without at this stage in the interview getting into all of the changes that have taken place over the years, I'd like to ask you a bit about just what some of your initial impressions were when you arrive on this campus; your impressions of the campus itself, the buildings, the type of people you were coming into contact with.

THROWER: Actually, as I had said earlier that I was very favorably impressed with the goals and program that I had heard about before coming. So I was intrigued by what they were proposing to do, the outreach that they were planning, the expansion. And another thing that upon arrival on campus for the interview, I was very much impressed with Ed Martin and Jim Forcina with their professionalism, their friendliness. And I think in retrospect talking about President Martin one thing that he may not have been given the credit for over the years that I think he deserves and Ed Martin probably was the first president of Trenton State College that really looked to an external view and looking to expand the concept of the college at Trenton State and to bring in people from across the country on the faculty.

DUBOIS: I remember Bob, your telling me once that when Ed Martin came here this college was still something like seventy percent of the people who were on the staff and the faculty were graduates of the school itself and it was under Ed Martin that really a number of people started to be hired from the outside.

THROWER: Yes, I forget the exact percentage but it was a high percentage and there were some very excellent people here..

DUBOIS: Oh, of course.

THROWER: ...who were graduates but I think Ed being a Missourian saw the need for a diversity of philosophies and backgrounds and so I think he needs to be given credit for really going out and making a very concerted effort to bring people to this campus to supplement the faculty that were already here, people from other colleges and universities and other backgrounds to really start to make a national and even an international flavor to the campus. I think Ed needs to be given credit for that. I know interestingly when he was back last fall for the homecoming, had a chance to talk to him and he said and it stuck with me, he said, "You know, if I could be remembered for one thing during my tenure as President of Trenton State College, I'd like

to be remembered for the people I brought to Trenton State College." Which I think is a great legacy for a man to leave.

DUBOIS: Well I think it is a great legacy and I'm very glad you made that point because actually as I remember, you didn't have that long a professional relationship with Ed Martin because Warren Hill came in as president shortly thereafter, is that correct?

THROWER: Actually, to my surprise having been hired by Ed Martin in March, when I arrived on campus in June, Ed was no longer president. He had resigned and Warren Hill had been hired as the new president and Warren came to Trenton State from the state of Maine. He was a Commissioner of Education in the state of Maine up until that time so Warren and his wife, Kitty, arrived on campus the same time I did in the summer of 1963 and Warren stayed here three years before he moved on to another position. Actually, we went through a series those first few years of my tenure here being hired by Ed Martin and then the first three years under the presidency of Warren Hill and then Virgil Gillenwater came on campus for two years and then Robert Heussler was here for most of two years and then we had Clayt Brower and then currently Harold Eickhoff. So, I've had the opportunity-

DUBOIS: You've broken in a lot of presidents over the years.

THROWER: Well or they've broken me in one, I'm not sure which it is.

DUBOIS: They tried. Well, Bob when you arrived here I believe and correct me if I'm wrong, you came as an assistant professor?

THROWER: Yes.

DUBOIS: Now, at some point in this history you took on the major administrative role of leading this department and later this school. When in the course of your time here did that take place?

THROWER: Okay, as you say, I started as an assistant professor in the Department of Industrial Arts and in the spring of 1965 Bob Worthington resigned as chairman and moved downtown as the Assistant Commissioner in charge of vocational education for the state of New Jersey. And it was about that same time interestingly we had put forth a request to change the name of the program from Industrial Arts to Industrial Education. When Bob got downtown, he found it sitting on the desk down there. It hadn't been acted on, so that was one of his first acts after he got downtown was to act on the change of the name.

DUBOIS: It's always good to have a friend downtown; I think we've learned that over the years.

THROWER: So, we became a Department of Industrial Education and Rudy Lockette took over as chairman and I actually at that time took on the responsibility as a graduate program coordinator and assistant to Rudy and then in a few years, Rudy had an opportunity to move on and so Rudy resigned in 1970 and it was at time that I was elected as the chairman of the department of another name change. At that time we had become a Department of Industrial Education and Technology because during that intervening time under Rudy's leadership we had started the movement to expand the program along with the expansion of the college into a multiple purpose institution. It was during those late sixties that the college made the transition from a single purpose teacher education institution to a multi-purpose and we did likewise in the department started looking into the potential for starting non-teaching programs in the technologies. So actually I took over as chairman in 1970.

DUBOIS: And I arrived in '72 and that's when I first started talking to you, Bob, and learning about the program that had been built up. I'm going to toss in a kind of an impressionistic question here because it was certainly one of the early impressions I got and I would like you to comment on it if you would. One of the things that always struck me and continues to strike me about your area I think more so than any of the other major academic divisions at the college is the kind of esprit de corps that exists not only among the faculty but also with the students. There's always kind of been a good feeling in your department and later your school of people working together and being genuinely enthusiastic about what you do. Was that always true or did you have a magic formula?

THROWER: No, I can't take all the credit for it. I'd like to think that I at least continued it but from the very beginning when I arrived on campus there was a spirit of cooperation and togetherness and I think moving into a separate facility and having everybody and all the programs under that leadership housed in one building is a major contributor to establishing that kind of esprit de corps. The tradition I think we have had over there is to build and develop a real family atmosphere which has included not just the faculty but the students, the secretarial staff, the custodial staff. The entire bit has operated as a big family and I think that has been-- I know it's been a focal point that I had put a lot of emphasis on that I would like and have always wanted to create that atmosphere and keep that atmosphere in the forefront in our program over there. People have commented that they can feel the friendliness when they come into the building which is a point of pride with me, actually.

DUBOIS: Well I think that's really a major accomplishment. While we're talking about the family over there, maybe we ought to say just a word or two about some of the members of that family. Of course you know many of the early ones that I did not know but I certainly remember people like Bob Worthington, Vince Dresser, Tod Herring of course who's still with us, Connie Johnson who we have the pleasure of-- is watching this interview today. Just tell me a bit about some of those early people and maybe some of the ones I haven't mentioned, too.

THROWER: I think it's an important point because I think one of the strengths of the program over the years has been the quality of the faculty. When I came on campus, we had people like Connie Johnson and Vince Dresser and Tod Herring and Rudy Lockette and Bob Worthington and George Russ was here then and Walter Macak was in graphic arts. We had a design instructor named Desio Sacchelli(?) and there are wild stories that could be told about Desio but I won't go into that now but we had a nucleus of people that were dedicated to the program and dedicated to students and I think that was the thing that impressed me from the very beginning was the unselfishness of the faculty in helping each other and helping students. Then we built on that with-- I was part, my coming was part of a major transition and expansion. The year I came, Ron Kobel and Dave Smith also joined the faculty. Now, Dave is still here and has made major contributions; Ron Kobel found greener pastures going back to his alma mater at Penn State but made a contribution while he was here.

DUBOIS: I think, too, over the years and I would imagine this is still true: your students have always had a pretty good sense of what they wanted to do, what they wanted to be when they got out of here which is maybe a little tougher sometimes for a history major, an English major to know exactly what the next step is after they get out of the college.

THROWER: Very true, the majority of our students in the, when I first arrived, were students who were very much interested in teaching industrial arts. Those that didn't really want to be teachers were committed to the related fields of wanting to spend their careers working in woodworking or metal working or electronics or whatever it may be, but since we were a single purpose institution, the only way they could get that professional education and training was to take a teacher's certificate. We did have some that really had no intention of teaching but they were going to use it in an allied field so that it was a very appropriate and thorough preparation for it. I think it would make a very interesting study because so many of our graduates have gone on to graduate degrees and to leadership positions in

education around the country. It would make an interesting graduate study and maybe we can entice some student to take that chore on as their graduate thesis.

DUBOIS: That would be interesting. Bob, up to this point I've been throwing some softball pitches at you I think it's time now that we get into the hardball here and some of the questions that may be a little tougher to answer in terms of... Well, let's begin with this one: tell us a bit about the development over the years of the relationships between the faculty and the administration and the Department of Higher Education. I know that as hard as it may be to believe, I believe at one time you were a rather militant faculty leader with the Faculty Association at that time and over the years--

THROWER: The truth will out.

DUBOIS: The truth will out. Let's hear about a bit of this and what you see your contribution as being in that area over the years.

THROWER: Well, I've always had a very strong feeling of professional involvement and professional organizations and that type of thing and we had when I came, a very active Faculty Association and it was a local branch of the New Jersey Education Association related to the Teacher's Association across the state. Again, interestingly, a lot of the leadership in the first years that I was here came particularly through Rudy Lockette who was president of the Faculty Association for two or three years and I became involved quite soon after arrival and actually starting the second year that I was here served as treasurer of the organization for several years and then moved up to vice president and to president during the organization. It was during that period of time that the colleges of New Jersey went through the transition of separating from the Department of Education. Up until that time, higher education was simply a branch of the Department of Education under the same commissioner as all the public schools were and it was--

DUBOIS: I'm going to interrupt you there, Bob, just to ask you in retrospect, has that been to the advantage of the colleges to have moved out of the Department of Education and into DHE and now I guess into a measure of autonomy?

THROWER: I think it in balance was a very definite asset. Under the regime of the Commissioner of Education, higher education was just simply another branch and quite often the concept was that higher education didn't get a fair shake, that the overwhelming size and magnitude of the elementary and secondary educational system in the state of New Jersey took precedent over the needs of higher education.

Whether that's actually true or not, I'm not in a position to make that kind of a judgment. It was felt that it would be to the advantage of the colleges to have a separate organization and so it was pushed through and the Department of Higher Education was established with a chancellor and so forth. So I think it has been an asset. It's hard to relate where the improvements came because we've had such drastic changes in budget situations since then as well. I think one of the things that struck me as a negative when I first came to the campus was that for the first few years I was here, our annual college budget had absolutely no money allocated for any maintenance of grounds and facilities. It was as if they didn't exist. It was after we became a separate entity under higher education that budgets started to reflect the need for grounds and they have continued to improve so that while the campus always was a beautiful campus and location with the lakes and the buildings and the trees and so forth, the improvement in the last few years of the grounds and the way they're kept and the flower beds at the entrance to the college and so forth has made a very definite impact on the overall impressions of the campus, I think.

DUBOIS: Then would the transition to the Department of Higher Education, was Chancellor Dungan the first one that you-

THROWER: Ralph Dungan was the first chancellor appointed by the governor.

DUBOIS: Did you have any contacts with him? Or was that all really more-

THROWER: Yes.

DUBOIS: I remind you, we do have libel laws and we want you to observe the law. No, we know he was a strong personality and that's why-

THROWER: A very strong personality and it was during his term of office that we had the controversy here on campus with President Robert Heussler and it happened to fall my lot to be president of the Faculty Association during that period of unrest and so I think it's accurate to say that I did play an active role in the attempts to have President Heussler removed from the office of president here.

DUBOIS: In that-

THROWER: If I may add for you, interrupt. It was a very trying period on campus and I know it was a very trying period personally, but during that entire episode, I always tried to keep in my own mind and guiding my actions that anything I did I wanted to do at least with

dignity and not a character assassination of any individual and so forth. Even though I was in opposition to what an individual may have stood for, my own personal code was to at least respect that individual and go about what had to be done with dignity in that regard.

DUBOIS: Well over the years I've talked to a number of others who played a role in that period of time and who were opponents of the Heussler regime. Some of them have said that really President Heussler did have some good objectives for the college but that he lacked the administrative, some of the human skills to really bring about the kind of transition that he and some others wanted. Would you agree with that or do you feel the goals themselves were wrong?

THROWER: No, I think they were wrong for that time. They were goals that had been established I think by the people downtown and as a lot of people like to say by a group—

DUBOIS: The Princeton mafia?

THROWER: The Princeton group had set. I think the big error was that they were goals that were trying-- they tried to impose on the campus without making the campus aware of what they were. I think they were premature. Interestingly, if you go back and examine those goals that in the intervening years we have arrived at many of those goals, we have accomplished them. But I think it was the manner that they tried to be implemented and the timing was the bad part and unfortunately the individual that was chosen to implement them did not, in my judgment, have the personal skills to execute it. As an individual I found him a very warm individual, a very pleasant person to converse with but his interpersonal skills in carrying out goals like that were lacking.

DUBOIS: Well let's talk a moment about somebody who I guess in his approach was really light-years away from that, the man who was here when I was hired and that's Clayt Brower and Clayt's way of doing things. And also when I came, I came the same year as Gordon Goewey. Now am I correct Bob in thinking that I remember one of the first things Gordon did was to have that kind of council of deans and academic directors that met on a regular basis to discuss a whole variety of questions, dividing up the budget and everything else. Was that the first time you'd done that on a formal basis or had that been done before?

THROWER: No, that was the beginning of that form of council. You mentioned Clayt Brower and Clayt was a very strong person-oriented individual. Very committed to each individual and dealing with each

individual and personal skills were very high. I think as you mentioned, he brought Gordon Goewey in as the Academic Vice President. Gordon was another individual that was very person-oriented and very--operated in a very democratic fashion. He was the one that organized the deans and directors into an academic affairs staff really is what it amounted to and we met on a regular basis and it was Gordon's style to bring all of the issues to the table and have a rather open discussion and consensus arrival with those. It's a style of administration that was very comfortable, you felt like you were very much a part and a contributor to it. As a style, I'm not sure the process always led to the very best results; sometimes the equal distribution of spoils is not necessarily the best way to achieve your goals.

DUBOIS: Right. Well I think it was around that table though, Bob that I began to start getting a genuine respect for your administrative abilities. I think we all know that you have at times a persona of the old country boy who's taken in by the city slickers but we've discovered over the years that you're a pretty shrewd, sophisticated administrator when it comes to things like 'what's my share of the graduate assistants,' 'what's my share of this,' and I've seen you operate around that table and you've done it very effectively. You've really been a very strong representative for your school and for the college.

THROWER: Well thank you. Like a fellow Tar Heel, Senator Sam Ervin kept reminding the nation that he was just a simple country lawyer.

DUBOIS: And all he did was bring down a president.

THROWER: You're right, you know I'm just a country boy and you city slickers always took advantage of me.

DUBOIS: Well those were good sessions at that point and I'm pleased I know that that group has continued over the years though it's operated a little differently with the deans having a meeting and then the full staff meeting.

THROWER: Let me say something about that, Paul, because the style that we have operated under Tony DiGiorgio has been quite different but I would hasten to add a very effective administrative style, somewhat different in approach but just as effective and in some ways maybe more effective for the good of the institution.

DUBOIS: We've certainly made some great strides forward and I think one of the things that has happened in recent years that has been an add-on that I think is good are the various retreats that are taken

now so that we have an opportunity in a relaxed atmosphere to look at the college goals and objectives as well as what's happening in our respective departments and schools.

THROWER: Yes, I've always been a strong advocate of it and actually I had started those in the department a number of years before the college, we picked it up in the Academic Affairs staff. We started many years ago utilizing one of the camps up in the northwest part of the state as a location where it didn't cost us a lot of money where we were able to take the faculty for a few days and to get away from the telephones and the interruptions and so forth and where we could devote long sessions to curriculum and other issues that needed to be hashed out. It was another contributor to the esprit de corps, getting to know each other better. So I've long been a strong advocate of the camps and using the camps and even the more plush facilities for retreats. I guess I'm one of the voices in the wilderness that they even enjoyed going to Camp Mohican.

DUBOIS: That's right I remember Dean Ollio being in a distinct minority at that issue. Bob, as you look over the years here at Trenton State, what are some of the personal and institutional accomplishments that you're most proud of? I know you've been the author of books and periodical articles and there have been major achievements in the school, what are some of the things that stand out in your mind that you feel good about?

THROWER: Well, the whole area that I feel extremely good about, Paul, that we haven't really talked about has been what happened within now the School of Technology from the time it was simply a Department of Industrial Arts. That transition, if I might do a chronology of that?

DUBOIS: Yes, I think we ought to talk about that because that's a major part of the story.

THROWER: Yes it is; it is a major part of my story at Trenton State anyway. As we had indicated earlier, we were a Department of Industrial Arts and then in the mid-sixties about the time again that Dr. Worthington moved downtown we expanded our program and added a vocational education program as well as the industrial arts education program. The vocational education program was aimed at providing certification for those people coming from industry that were being employed to teach in the vocational schools of the state. So we became a very focal center for that and it is a program that has grown to the point where now the program here at Trenton State is the premiere program in the state of New Jersey and the one that the people downtown look to primarily for the training and certification

of their teachers throughout the state. So that was the first step in the transition. As I had mentioned earlier also in the late sixties we started to take a look at the multi-purpose function and the possibility of offering technology programs which were not teacher education oriented. After some major studies and committees and consultants and that type of thing, we, in 1970, started the three engineering technology programs in electronics, mechanical and industrial and started bringing faculty in in those areas. I know Dr. Allen Katz was the first faculty member hired and he was to head up the electronics program and we hired a Dr. Milton Profant again from Ohio State University-

DUBOIS: Well where else?

THROWER: To start the mechanical program. Unfortunately, Milt was one Ohioan that couldn't take the east coast so after a couple years he went back to Ohio. That was the start of the program and it was about that same time in 1971 that we did a major reorganization of the whole structure of the college and went to at that time a School of Education, a School of Arts and Sciences and three divisions: a Division of Nursing, a Division of Business, and a Division of Industrial Education and Technology. And my title then moved from Chairman to Director and the three directors function the same as deans and the reason they weren't called deans at the time is because the table of organization provided by the state only allowed two deans on campus so we carried the title of director but functioned as a dean. So that was the structure and the start of the engineering technology programs. I look on that transition because in 1971 we had sixteen majors the first year in the three programs and now we are over six hundred majors in the three programs. So they have been a major expansion and a growth and all three programs have been programs that have very quickly become accredited by the national accreditation board for engineering and technology. They are programs that have from the very beginning were turning out exceptional graduates who industry were grabbing as key individuals with not only the theoretical background of an engineer but also the practical hands-on experience of a technologist who were able to go into a industry and be productive from the very beginning rather than just the theorist and so people like RCA Astro and other major corporations started hiring our graduates and still very eagerly are looking for our graduates to fill slots with them. We've got a very enviable track record of our graduates moving right up the corporate ladders in those companies.

DUBOIS: Yes, I was interested Bob as this last year as a search was being conducted for your successor that I think almost without exception the people that were talked with about that position all

spoke to the very high reputation that Trenton State had in the engineering technology programs, the strength of that whole program and the solid foundation that that offers as the college now looks towards a somewhat different model.

THROWER: I think in carrying that theme further, the original question you were asking about some of the things that I felt...

DUBOIS: Good about

THROWER: ...the greatest sense of pride in and I think that transition that has happened within what is now known as the School of Technology here at Trenton State is one. And I cite it as an example. At one time back in the earlier years when we were just starting the technology programs, we had twenty-one faculty members in the Department of Industrial Arts and Vocational Education and over three hundred and fifty majors. During the intervening years unfortunately the teacher education program enrollments have dropped drastically that we are now down to a little less than fifty and we're down to six faculty members. I think one of the areas that I take a great deal of pride in and not that I was the one that accomplished, but I at least made it possible for it to happen and that is that a lot of our faculty that were employed originally as faculty members in the industrial education, industrial arts program are faculty members that had the strengths and the professional attitude that recognizing that they needed to, if they wanted to stay at Trenton State College and be part of a program, that they had to undergo mid-stream changes in careers. And we have a number of those people who have put a lot of their own time, energy and money into retraining themselves for totally new careers and have become leaders in the new programs that we have. I won't start to cite names because I might inadvertently overlook one, but there are several of them. And I think it's a matter of record that we've been able to make that transition of twenty-one full time faculty that were originally trained as teacher educators in an industrial education program and over three hundred and fifty majors to where we have gone to over six hundred majors in technology and down to less than fifty in the teacher education. Faculty has switched back and forth and taken on new roles and responsibilities and been able to accomplish that and maintain the relationships of faculty crossing departmental lines, major lines, teaching in both areas, making the switch. I think that has been if I had to point to probably one significant accomplishment I'd say that that has been it and just to have been able to manage that successfully, I take some pride in.

DUBOIS: I think you should. Bob, one of the things you've always been good at over the years I think is sharing credit with others and I know of at least one person that you'd want to share some of the credit of your accomplishments with and that of course is Doris, she is for those of you who don't know, Doris Thrower your wife. I ought to be a little more formal about this but she's such a good friend that I guess I treated it informally. Doris made particularly a big contribution I know with the Faculty Dames over the years and I thought you might like to just say a word about that.

THROWER: I would like to because I think in retrospect the college has really over the years gotten two for the price of one in that Doris also took a very strong interest and pride and involvement in the college and from the very beginning she became very active with what is known as the Faculty Dames organization. I know some people don't like the term but so be it, that's what the majority of the ladies have deemed the title was to be and is to remain so, Doris became very active in the organization and actually she has served four different terms as president over the last twenty-five years with that organization.

DUBOIS: And I know she's played a key part in something that I know both Throwers have had a genius for over the years and that's a genius for friendship which is a very good thing to have a genius for. Bob, I know I'm getting the signal that we're coming to the end of this interview now and I think of about fifty other questions I want to ask you, I wish we had two hours instead of one.

THROWER: Before we leave that one with Doris, incidentally and I guess it was coincidentally that her terms of office seemed to coincide with the arrival of a new president on campus for the college. So in the case of both the Gillenwaters as well as the Heusslers, Doris was the Dames president when they arrived on campus and spent a great deal of time in welcoming—well actually, it's also true with the Eickhoffs—of welcoming the president's wife to the campus and offering her assistance and help and to helping their adjustment and transition to the campus be as smooth as possible. Doris has really enjoyed that role.

DUBOIS: Bob, tell us just a word about your plans for the future and then we really are going to have to wind up our interview today.

THROWER: Okay. Well, as anybody on campus who has been within earshot for a number of months knows that my plans are to move back to North Carolina. Several years ago I happened to be on a golf course down

there and liked it so much that I saw a vacant piece of property and made a purchase.

DUBOIS: A golf course near the-- well this sounds like you've died and gone to heaven, okay.

THROWER: Well, it is, we're looking forward to it because not only is it a beautiful golf course but it also has three well-stocked lakes for fishing on it. So just in the past few weeks, in fact just last week I was down and we poured the footings for a new house that we have designed and are now in process of building there and hopefully we will be moving into it by Christmas of this year.

DUBOIS: Well that really just sounds great, Bob and I'm going to give you one last chance if there's anything else you'd like to say in the interview that we haven't covered. Speak now or forever hold your peace down in North Carolina.

THROWER: Well I think I have on numerous occasions expressed the feeling that I had probably the best job on this campus. As Dean of the School of Technology, it was of all of the dean's positions I would not have traded it for any one of the others because I know I'm prejudice but I think I had the best group of faculty. I think I had the best cohesive programs going. Tony Hantjis might disagree with me but--

DUBOIS: There's nobody here today that's going to challenge you on that, Bob.

THROWER: And it was genuinely a job, all the positions I've had here over the years have been ones that I thoroughly enjoyed. I think one of the things that I'm going to miss most with retirement is getting up and coming to this campus early every morning. I usually would-- over the last twenty-five years I basically arrived on campus about 7:30 every morning and fortunately I had the office with--

DUBOIS: I used to see you coming in on campus, I remember that, Bob.

THROWER: Yeah. I can tell when you arrive usually. But I had the best view out the window of my office of the lake and so forth. I'm going to miss sitting there every morning with the newspaper and a cup of coffee and watching you latecomers arrive on campus.

DUBOIS: Well, Bob with that zinger I'm going to let you get off the hook. It's been a great pleasure talking with Bob Thrower, the Dean of the School of Technology today and I think another very successful entry in the living history series. Bob, we wish you and Doris many

happy years of retirement in North Carolina and a warning, we're going to be down to visit you.

THROWER: Well, thank you for the opportunity and I am very grateful for the opportunity to contribute to this living history of the college because the twenty-five years that I have been here have been very enjoyable ones and hopefully I have some contributions to it.

DUBOIS: You have indeed Bob.