

Dr. Adelbert K. Botts, with Richard Hewitt.

Hewitt: Today we're chatting about the good old days with our beloved professor emeriti, Adelbert K. Botts, who spent 25 years at Trenton State College as a professor, as Chairman of the Geography Department, and of the Social Studies Department. Dr. Botts, when did you first come to Trenton State?

Dr. Botts: In 1940. I drove in early in July with my family, found a good place to live and moved into the Department. It was a big step in our life.

Hewitt: Where were you from originally?

Botts: Originally from way back, I grew up in Minnesota. I went to undergraduate school in Valley City, North Dakota. And then I got married. My wife was a very sensible woman and encouraged me to go on to graduate school so we did that. After graduate school I got the job in New York State. I taught at Normal School in Cortland, New York, for six years.

Hewitt: Wasn't there an interesting story as to how you met your wife Donna?

Botts: Yes. It was rather an interesting story and I'm accused sometimes of some rather subversive activity in that situation. When I applied for the position in Litchfield, Minnesota, our superintendent who hired me said "I have a very attractive young principal that I just hired last week and I think that you two folks would work together very well." It turned out that we did, but we didn't have a date until the first of October when we got our first checks and by Christmastime we were engaged and we were married in June, but the strange thing about it and the thing that people sometimes think I managed or manipulated the thing is that at that time in Minnesota they would not hire a married woman. So Mrs. Botts couldn't teach the next year, and there was an opening in the principal ship that year, and strangely I was appointed principal. I've been accused of marrying her for the principal ship, which is not the true case. The alliance has lasted pretty well, 54 years.

Hewitt: Where did you get your Ph.d in Geography?

Botts: We went to--I say we because my wife and our older daughter were with me by that time--we went to Clark University in Worcester, Massachusetts. That was one of the leading colleges of geography at that time. There were only two or three colleges that had graduate work in geography, the University of

Chicago, the University of Southern California, and Clark, and we went to Clark. When I think of Clark and our graduate work, I always think of it in terms of we rather than I because she went all the way through with me and we and the youngsters--youngster--ate oatmeal many days when we might have had better care if we'd stayed in teaching.

Hewitt: As I recall, you taught in New Zealand before you came to Trenton State. How did that come about?

Botts: I was always rather restless, I guess, and one spring I thought it would be nice to have an exchange. Exchange Professorships were not popular at that time as they are now, they were not organized at all. So I sat down in March and wrote letters to Commissioners of Education in several English speaking countries and got nice replies back from most of them, "we'll get in touch with you, don't bother us again." But the Commissioner from New Zealand spoke rather encouragingly, and I felt good about that, and early November I received a letter from a gentleman in Auckland saying that he had word from the Commissioner and he would like to come and exchange jobs with me, and he'd be able to be there the first of February and all I would have to do is come down there and take over there in his establishment that month. Well, this was November. When I had written the letters I hadn't said anything to anyone else about it. This was just an exploratory thing. So that day I took the letter home and asked Mrs. Botts how she'd like to spend the next year in New Zealand. And she very enthusiastically said "fine, but what will we use for money?" Practical. We talked about what we could do and the principal of the school, the normal school, had a little imagination too and he encouraged me, and said that he would try to get the State Department to okay the job. So we finally got it arranged for the next September rather than February, so next September we packed up our two children, by then, and went to New Zealand, and Mr. Jones and his wife came to Cortland, took our job, took our house and we went to New Zealand and took over his. We never saw Mr. and Mrs. Jones. We passed them in the Pacific on the way out and he went home by way of Europe and we came back across the Pacific, so we never had the pleasure of knowing them, but we had a very exciting experience in New Zealand.

Hewitt: As you can recall, what was Trenton State like when you came here in 1940?

Botts: It was a big school. Much larger than the little normal school that I had taught at in Cortland. There was Green Hall and Kendall Hall, the library, the gymnasium, the original buildings are all still here but have been added to in many cases. Bliss Hall, Norsworthy, and Allen Hall, I think that was about the whole business, except of course the dining hall which was the Inn, down by the lake, and there were a few other buildings like Cromwell that was located just about where we're sitting now. It seemed like a big place at the time. It had moved out from center city just about six years before I came so everything was new and growing and enthusiastic at that time, and under very imaginative management. Roscoe West was an imaginative and very good administrator.

Hewitt: How did you come to be hired by Roscoe West?

Botts: After I came back from New Zealand, I went back to Cortland for a year, and during that year, Roscoe West had a retirement in the Geography Department, and he wrote to Clark University where I had graduated and asked them to recommend someone, and the fact that I had just come back from New Zealand was in the President's mind and so he recommended me, and Roscoe and his wife came up one Sunday to interview me in Cortland, and during the course of the interview my young daughter who was just 2 years old climbed on his lap and really made a great selling kneel (?) and so I give her a great deal of credit for the fact that we were selected to come to Trenton.

Hewitt: If I throw out some of the names of people who were here at the time you came to the college, could you --- (**Botts:** Be glad to. The best thing in teaching is some of the folks that you had a chance to work with.) Forrest Irwin.

Botts: Forrest Irwin was a very successful, very fine administrator. He was vice president of this college when I came here and eventually went on as president of Jersey City.

Hewitt: Charles Harp.

Botts: Charlie Harp was the heart of geology at this college and worked diligently. He commuted from New York for many, many years, and we always admired him for his stamina and being able to carry on that load.

Hewitt: Bessie Clark?

Botts: Bessie Clark was a fine little historian, and a lovely lady. I liked her very much.

Hewitt: How about John Quimby?

Botts: John Quimby was a business administrator, and he took his job very, very seriously, and one of the things that gave him the most headaches was when people insisted on walking across and making paths on Quimby's Prairie, the land right in front of Green Hall.

Hewitt: Mike Travers?

Botts: Mike Travers was the head of the department of Business Education, and ran a very tight ship. He was also very active in public affairs and was known for many years as Judge Travers.

Hewitt: Bertha Lawrence?

Botts: Bertha Lawrence was an outstanding teacher in the Trenton School system for many years and then came out here as an administrator and was one of the first women administrators in the colleges in New Jersey. She left her mark on a great many people. A very fine woman.

Hewitt: Dr. Carl Schuster?

Botts: Carl Schuster and I went through a great deal together. I've often said of Carl that you could trust him and that he would never say anything worse behind your back than he would say right to your face. He was very outspoken and we had many pleasant arguments and discussions together. He never quite accepted my politics, and spoke many times of "the damn Democrats!"

Hewitt: How about Pat Miller?

Botts: He was in the Economics Dept. in the college and had a great following and was very, very much admired by the students that worked with him and he inspired many of them to do very fine work.

Hewitt: When does Leon Wolcott come in?

Botts: Leon Wolcott came here when I was Dean of Men, and we lived together in the dormitory in Green Hall for several years. We had a continuing friendly relationship for many, many years.

Hewitt: Did you know Marianna Packer very well?

Botts: Yes. She was another one of the very outstanding women educators of the state and as head of the physical education area study left a very strong imprint on the total character of this institution.

Hewitt: How about Earl Dean?

Botts: Dean also was the male member and director of the athletics and became a favorite of many, many of the people and those who followed the athletics of Trenton had a very fine feeling in our heart for Earl.

Hewitt: You mentioned that most of the facilities and the buildings were brand, spanking new when you came, how about Brown Bungalow? That was decidedly different.

Botts: Brown Bungalow was an old building when we came and in the course of events as things grew our department was moved over to Brown Bungalow and it became the headquarters for the Social Studies Department. It was not a very satisfactory facility, but we did get along. We had a terrible fight there one day when I went to the basement and discovered that a whole stack of cans of lacquer, highly inflammable lacquer, stored in the basement and the furnace was in operation and it was a most dangerous situation. We closed down Brown Bungalow for several hours that day until Maintenance could get rid of all that dangerous material, otherwise it was a pleasant place to work.

Hewitt: How about classes and teaching load? It seems to me that you had Saturday classes back in those days.

Botts: Oh, yes, we had Saturday classes. We eventually came to a place where you had a choice. Either you had classes on Monday or you could have classes on Saturday. But you had to have classes on one of those days and at that same time at the beginning, many of us were very ignorant about teaching loads. As we look back on it now we feel that we probably were exploited because many of us taught sixteen, seventeen or eighteen hours a week! We didn't know anything about the twelve hour week in those days. But we've learned. By the time I went to 1965, we were quite concerned about load, all of us.

Hewitt: Where did you live when you first came here? I think for a time you moved into Bliss, but where did you live when you first came here?

Botts: We lived in a house right across the road from Lanning School for two years and then I bought a house in Pennington and lived out there for four years and then Roscoe invited us to come down and serve as Dean of Men and the family lived in Bliss Hall and ate in the dormitory, and we were supposed to set a good example, a good family example for the aspiring young teachers who were exposed to us.

We did our best and at the end of four years the family, felt that they would much rather go back to plain old family living, so we went to Pennington and bought another house and spent the last 15 years there.

Hewitt: You spoke of your teaching load. What were your duties in addition to teaching in those days?

Botts: I was chairman of the department, but there were just two of us, and then three and four, and then of course when they combined the departments, totally against our will. There were 25 or 30 in the departments. While I was Dean of Men I carried my same teaching load, as I had carried otherwise, and then we got into committee work of all sorts. One of the things that came up eventually, after we left the campus as a sideline, was the exchange program. I worked very extensively with that and there were a number of other people who were very active in it. Some of them still on campus and still carrying on, but we did have a very interesting and active exchange program and that was all pretty much in addition to my regular teaching load. Then we tried to carry on the work of geography on the state, we were members of the New Jersey Association and for awhile did a little geographical journal that came out three or four times a year. Oh, just things that kept us out of mischief when we weren't teaching.

Hewitt: When did Bernice Casper come into your department?

Botts: I don't remember the exact date, but she was the first addition to the department after I came. It was the early forties, and Miss Tilton retired, she's the one who was in the department when I came, and so we had to have a replacement and Bernice was graduating, well she was studying and working at the University of Pennsylvania in Philadelphia and eventually went on and got her degree from Nebraska, but she was a remarkably fine and helpful addition to the department. And eventually as the department grew and the college grew, we added Jessie Turk.

Hewitt: She came in a little after Bernice then? She retired this past year.

Botts: Yes. Several years later.

Hewitt: She certainly was an interesting addition to the college.

Botts: She was. Both very active and delightful people to work with. We worked together very well actually I take some satisfaction in the fact that some people occasionally spoke of those two as the "Bottsie Twins."

Hewitt: What was it like here at TSC during the War. That must have brought a few changes.

Botts: It brought a few changes. I can remember going to class with the girls who were left because many of the boys were in the Service and we'd hear the airplanes going over and everything would stop. You could just see the girls' minds wondering if that were Charles, or Jim, or Joe in that fighter or bomber. You couldn't help living the worries with them that they had. It was quite an experience and it sort of touched your heart to see them. Many of them had good experiences eventually, and the boys came back and that was another story and another very pleasant aspect of the whole war situation when it was over.

Hewitt: Did you do any special teaching or consulting during the War?

Botts: A little. I was at an age where I just sort of fell between the two wars. I was a little too young to get in the First World War and too old to be drafted in the Second World War, but there were opportunities to do things. For several years I was in the Coast Guard Auxiliary. We didn't get paid for it, but we got a uniform and we signed up for two nights a week, one night for training and one night for duty, and it made us feel as if we were doing something. The Coast Guard boys didn't like it particularly because we took over the soft jobs, while they were sent out to do the dirty work. And that was one of my services. And I went to Russia once or twice for consultations. I had been in New Zealand and done map work there and when they got to the place where we had this educational work, we were training the boys who were going to Europe with a little geography, etc., or whatever part of the world they were going to. I taught some of those courses. There was a period for a year or so where I would spend three or four days teaching here and two days at Briar College up on the Hudson, and during that experience I met Felix Hirsch who eventually became Librarian of the college that was one of the great benefits of that particular contact.

Hewitt: Isn't there an interesting story back in those days about the great Soviet Atlas?

Botts: About 1940 the Russians produced a rather excellent atlas, a complete world atlas, and George **Kressey** who was professor of geography at Syracuse had worked in Russia and he bought five or six copies of it, and at that time with the unsettled conditions, they were the only copies that got to this country. And when I came to Trenton in 1940 one of the first things that I requisitioned for the library

was a copy of that atlas, so we got one of those precious copies and had it here. When the war started, the military needed more atlases, and there weren't enough of them to serve their purposes, so they requisitioned colleges for atlases--it was drafted--so we sent it to Washington and it spent four years in Washington, but it was returned after the war was over.

Hewitt: So it's a war veteran then.

Botts: The atlas is a war veteran, yes.

Hewitt: What changes came about here after the war?

Botts: The greatest change, the most satisfactory change, was the return of the veterans. The boys who now had the G.I. Bill which made it possible for them to come back, and they were mature men, they had a real purpose in life, and I can think of so many of those young men who have turned out very well, and it just happened to be at the time when I was living in the dormitory, so I had contact with them at that level and some of my most pleasant memories of the institution are my contacts with the young men who came back after the war was over, with a real purpose in life and real dedication--no nonsense. They didn't go in for the silly things that young folks are very likely to enjoy.

Hewitt: I recall they built some veteran's housing which we referred to as vet shacks in those days.

Botts: Yes, and you lived in them, didn't you? That was quite an experience. There were about a dozen of them?

Hewitt: There were two large barracks, pipes with apartments and there were a number of units ---

Botts: And they were about as well built as a number of chicken houses, weren't they?

Hewitt: Well, it was a real boon to a veteran, if he or she had a family, and I can recall, I lived in an apartment in one of the barracks for forty-five dollars a month. It was completely furnished including all heating, electric, and gas for cooking, and it was just fine. It was just a step from the library and it was wonderful to live there.

Botts: It was a good deal. Of course after they lost their utility other buildings of a similar sort were introduced as classrooms. (**Hewitt:** Relocatables) I didn't have the experience of teaching in any of them, but after I came back to visit I saw the work that had been done on those buildings.

Hewitt: When did you buy the very old colonial in Pennington that you restored?

Botts: That was in 1950. After we finished our stint as Dean of Men, we went back to Pennington and bought a house that was very old that hadn't been painted for about forty years, that had two or three drop lights, no furnace, no inside plumbing or anything, and some of our friends recommended very seriously that a match would be the most effective tool to work with, but we didn't. We restored it without spoiling the old lines and several other people worked with it since and improved it, and now it's one of the ten old houses of Pennington.

Hewitt: Did you get involved in Pennington politics? It seems to me that Pennington was rather a Republican bailiwick in those days. What were you doing in politics, you stayed and you were a Democrat.

Botts: The Democrats were hard up for a candidate for Mayor, and right at the very last minute Tom McCann and some of the others got a brainstorm, and they came down and talked me into running. I talked it over with Donna, she was sure that nothing would come of it, so she said yes. She'd go along with it. And so we went and I tapped on doors all over town and helped distribute literature, took it very seriously, and then actually went over with a landslide of about seven votes.

Hewitt: So your Council was Republican and you were a Democratic Mayor.

Botts: That's right. And we have a system in New Jersey that's known as the "Weak Mayor's Town Council System" so that the Mayor voted whenever there was a tie, and with a fully Republican Council, there never was a tie. So I didn't have much to do.

Hewitt: You were rather famous during your tenure at Trenton State for some of the field trips that you took. Could you tell us about some of those?

Botts: We enjoyed our field trips very, very much. We always took little field trips and frequently went up to Palisades, the Palisades themselves and the striations on the surface of them, we took a boat trip around the island, and we went to Philadelphia, Lancaster, and those local trips, and then in the forties, when people could travel around the United States but couldn't travel to Europe, our department organized more extensive field trips, three weeks or so, in which the first two or three times we took the

local bus or hired a local bus, and the first year we went up into Canada, and out onto the Gaspé Peninsula, and back and another time we took a trip to the South as far as Atlanta, Georgia, and the last of the five trips that I conducted, was under the auspices of the NEA, and we went by train from Trenton to Buffalo, and by boat from Buffalo to Duluth, there were still boats at that time, and by bus to Winnipeg and by train to Churchill, Manitoba and back. I had about 35 people in that. I remember one of the things that worried us a great deal. One of the ladies who signed up for that trip from Kansas was 72 years old. We just didn't know whether we could handle a person of that age. I look at it very differently now, strange isn't it, but we got along very well. And on our way back we came down through Minneapolis, St. Paul, on to Chicago and back most of the way by bus. And after that Europe began to open up and field trips to Europe became popular, and the old trips didn't sell anymore, so we got out of that but we gradually shifted over other phases of exchange programs.

Hewitt: Whenever one mentions the trips that we used to take, one mentions Harvey, very famous as the bus driver of Trenton State bus.

Botts: And I used to get Christmas greeting from him as long as he lived. We enjoyed working together very much. Harvey was a good driver and he drove us all over the place.

Hewitt: Can you recall any of your students who have gone on to bigger and better things. Do you remember John Hughes?

Botts: Yes. John has been a real great satisfaction. I remember John and his wife went with us on one of our first or second field trips to Canada. They were a charming couple at that time and it's been a great satisfaction to watch them as they have progressed and he's now very prominent in the cartographical work in Washington. One of the greatest thrills that we got was twenty years ago during the Cuba crisis to find John on television interpreting the air photographs of Cuba with the President.

Hewitt: Yes, I think he appeared recently. I believe he's now second in command of his unit in the State Department.

Botts: Yes, it's things like that that are the honored increment of teaching. And this chance to come back and be interviewed by one of your former students, you remember as a young aspiring youngster who's

gone out and participated in exchange programs, went out West and got his degree and now works in the department where you once worked is a lot of satisfaction, Dick.

Hewitt: There's a lot of satisfaction in interviewing the man who led me into it also. How about Andy Moreland?

Botts: Andy is another one we can point to and be proud. I knew him when. He was President of the class when he was here, we knew he was going on to be a successful man and he built up the junior college over at Toms River, worked many years there, and became well known and very well liked there. Since his retirement from there he's gone to Texas and is active in education work in Texas.

Hewitt: He was the President of Ocean County Community College. I remember that Jim Florio was around then.

Botts: Yes, he was in the department. He was much more interested and active in the historical and political science phase of the social studies work, but always a man that you knew was going someplace. And after he graduated here he had a chance to go to the Woodrow Wilson Foundation in Princeton and he's been a leader in his type of activity ever since. We're very proud of him.

Hewitt: So you retired after 25 years. That would be 1965. Where did you go from Trenton State? Did you go into retirement?

Botts: When I retired from here, I intended to fully retire. But I had some friends out in the middle West and they needed somebody for a year, so he invited me to come out as a visiting professor for a year. So we decided to take it for that and went out there and stayed seven years. I didn't want any community work. I didn't want any extension work. I just wanted to teach. They were happy to have me do that because they had young people in the department who were anxious to take the extra jobs. So that gave us a little more time to relax and at Christmastime and on vacations we'd take trips and in 1972 I retired from-Bowling Green, Ohio, permanently and in the meantime we bought a little cottage on a lake in Minnesota. And we winterized it, and went out there to live, but soon discovered that Minnesota winters were no longer to our liking. So we bought a trailer went down to Texas, we tried Florida and we tried other places, but ended up by going to Texas for six or seven winters with a trailer, and then back to

Minnesota for the summer. Finally we thought we'd make it a little more permanent and not drag the trailer around any more so we bought a mobile home. So we spent about half a year in Texas and half a year in Minnesota. Then several years ago an illness in the family made us decide that we were touring (?) and might need a little more health care than we had before, so the girls, our daughters, who were living in the East thought it would be nice for us to be in this part of the country so eventually we bought a home in the retirement community of Newtown, known as Pennswood, so we have complete health care for life, and are close enough to our daughters to see them and our grandchildren and we're pretty well, pretty happily settled down there now.

Hewitt: I understand there are a few other Trenton State retirees living in the same area.

Botts: Yes. Dr. Carpenter is over there, and there are quite a number of people from Pennington who we had known before, and we have other friends who are showing a very strong interest in coming to Pennswood.

Hewitt: When did Dr. Carpenter come into the department?

Botts: I'm no good at dates anymore, but I think it was about the same time as Jesse Turk came in, it was after Berniece came. She'd been a very, very active person in the whole college community, and actually she continued to be an active part of the college community, even while she was retired. She didn't break away completely from it as I had.

Hewitt: Mrs. Botts tells me you keep very busy over there. What do you do?

Botts: We have hobbies. She has hobbies. Painting. Right now she's organizing a class for some of them who are interested in taking up watercolor or oil painting and my own hobby is lapidary, we call it rock hunting, and we pick up rocks when we go around. I polish them, grind them, and I had a few courses in silver work, so I can work with making jewelry and besides getting away and supplying my family with a fair amount of jewelry, I sell some in the gift shop at the Pennswood Village, and that's always a pleasure. The interesting thing right now is that many of the people who live in the Village have discovered that I have the tools to work with so when an earring breaks it's always one that is very dear to them and they always wonder if I couldn't just fix it for them, so I do a great deal of jewelry repair.

Hewitt: And I recall that you have two daughters and you're near them now. You must be very happy about that. What are they doing now?

Botts: One of my daughters lives in Pennington and she works as an artist for Ispanky the artist who does ceramic work. By the way her older son is just about to graduate from Trenton State College in the mechanical engineering department. I expect to see him graduate in January of this year. Another daughter is in Pennsylvania out near . Her husband is a dean in the division of science or arts and sciences and the daughter herself is running a photography business out there, and has done a great deal of work with two and three projector programs, selling and public relations programs. She did very fine work in a big hospital in Williamsport. So they're very, very active, and her daughters are both in college and one of them graduates soon as a nurse and the other one is taking music. So we find a great deal of satisfaction in our grandchildren. The youngest granddaughter is graduating from high school this year, and she looks forward to attending college in the fall.

Hewitt: You were away for quite a while and returned to the area so the final question that I might ask, what are your impressions of Trenton State as you see it today?

Botts: Many, many changes of course. But there's enough of the old place to give you a great deal of satisfaction, and I've seen so much good work go into the growth and development of the college, and the reputation that I find that it has is most gratifying. Since we came back to this region, I went back to several affairs and one of them that gave me the greatest thrill was the dedication of the student union. It's an accomplishment and reflects a very splendid attitude of growth on the part of the institution, and as I look around it's a source of great satisfaction to see that many of the activities such as the exchange program and the library work and the department growing--it's a satisfaction to see those things and a lot of things that I got a pleasure out of are still functioning and expanding.

Hewitt: Thank you very much for coming today, Dr. Botts. Hope to see you again many times.

Botts: Thank you. It's been a very great pleasure for me too.