

Interview of Conrad Johnson, Professor of Emeritus of Industrial Arts and Vincent W. Dresser, Professor of Emeritus of Industrial Arts interviewed by Dr. Robert Weber, Professor in Dept. of Technology Education

Weber - Good day. My name is Bob Weber. I am a professor in the Department of Technology Education here at Trenton State College and I will like to welcome you to the Living History Program here at Trenton State. It gives me great pleasure to introduce two colleagues of mine, two teachers and most of all two friends: to my immediate right, Professor Emeritus Conrad Johnson and to his right Professor Emeritus Vincent Dresser. Combined between the two of these gentlemen we're probably talking about 60 years of experience here at Trenton State College. I would like to start off first with speaking to Conrad Johnson regarding how he got first involved with Trenton State College. I think it was as a student. Connie?

Johnson – Yes, it was as a student but a music student. (Weber: ok) I came here as a music student and stayed in that department about two years then I transferred to Industrial Arts.

Weber - Now I assume that this wasn't, your music work wasn't in Green Hall. It was not even on this campus.

Johnson - No it wasn't on this campus. The College then, at that time, was located on Clinton Avenue in Trenton where the Grant School is now located.

Weber - Ok. So you were in the transition from the Grant School which is the Trenton center city campus to the Ewing Township campus. (Johnson-That's right) And the campus was built as a college and you arrived here and you were impressed.

Johnson- Yes, my first trip out to this campus was appropriately enough on an Arbor Day for an Arbor Day celebration and we came out on the bus and we were amazed at the size of the campus compared to the one down on Clinton Ave. As I recall it was Green Hall, the Library, Kendall Hall and the four, the three dormitories: Ely, Brewster and Allen. That was the campus but the Quimby's Prairie, the big lawn in front of Green Hall was green and lush and it just looked magnificent. I remember standing on Kendall, the steps of Kendall Hall looking over this campus and it looked just marvelous.

Weber - And I think it still does.

Johnson - Oh it does. More so than ever.

Weber - You and Vince probably crossed paths because as I understand you were a senior majoring in Industrial Arts as Vince was coming in as a freshman.

Dresser – Connie was graduating in Spring of '36 and I came in as a freshman in the Fall of '36 so we just missed each other. (Weber - Ok, ok) You were talking, we were talking before about recruitment and the number of students that we had. There were 9 students in my freshman class and during the four years just one lost out academically but we picked up a straggler somewhere during that four years so we still ended up with 9 although that one had disappeared. It's rather interesting when we talk about

recruitment. I was just wondering, how many people actually get enrolled in the program, by design or by accident? Because in thinking about my experience, having been out of high school for over three years, I just by chance, happen to meet one of my grammar school teachers whose daughter was attending Trenton State at the time. And she was talking about it and she had a catalog or a letter had been sent to her from her daughter and in it I saw that there was a program offered called Industrial Arts. Well in the school that I attended, I attended the high school, there weren't any industrial art classes but since there was the word art appeared in it, and I felt that I had some ability in me, along the lines of what I decided I would apply for the position. So I was very much surprised when I was accepted and I came here and I found out that art was a name associated with industry rather than just a narrow phase that I had attributed to it as art. I remember one of the responsibilities we had as a freshman class (and Connie alluded to) the buildings downtown. In order for us to save lumber, Professor Armstrong, delegated the nine of us with one of the trucks from the campus. Harvey was the bus driver, the truck driver at that time. And we went down there and took all of the old furniture that had been used in both the men's and women's dormitories. It was a nice grain of cherry and it was antique and very attractive. So we carefully dismantled all of the furniture and in order to eliminate taking off the finish we ran it through the surfacer. Now of course this raised havoc with the blade of the surfacer, but we skinned off just a small amount of it and this gave us quite an adequate supply of cherry for the following year. It was too bad we didn't save some of those pieces because they would really be of historic importance if they were available at the time.

Weber - Both of you gentlemen did your undergraduate experience in the basement of Green Hall?

Dresser – Basement of Green Hall. Were you in the basement of Green Hall too, Connie?

Johnson - Oh yes. We came up from Clinton Avenue and that whole shop wasn't much bigger than the room we're sitting in. And there was a little partition and behind that, that was the metal shop and we used....let's see... graphic art or printing didn't come until we came up here. So it was quite a change.

Dresser - I notice Connie that you're using the word shop. What's the connotation you developed to the present saying?

Johnson – We used to get to the point where Worthington came, he had to dress up even the vocabulary so that's when all the shops became laboratories.

Weber – Yes, I remember that in 1964 and many of the students in terms of doing a professional experience had to wear white lab coats (Johnson and Dresser: that's right, yes) in an attempt to, I guess upgrade the image of Industrial Arts and we are continuing to do that with our new name Technology Education. Tell me something about the person that is named for our building, Fred O. Armstrong. Apparently this person was a jack and a master of all trades. I've heard so much about him. I had the opportunity to meet his wife but never had an opportunity to meet him.

Johnson - Oh Evelyn. (Weber- Evelyn, yes) Well, Mr. Armstrong was a wonderful person. As students, we regarded him as a walking encyclopedia. He knew so much more than any of us and he got us interested in a lot of things and one thing he used to impress on us students was "Learn something. I

don't care what it is but learn something, specialize in something so that you can do it and you'll have something to sell." He used to tell us that all the time and he demonstrated it all the time. He was interested in anything that came along.

Weber – Yea, so the idea that all technology kind of at one point runs together was a model for him but as a student I can relate the same feelings that our people had for you two gentlemen: I mean walking encyclopedias (Dresser - very small editions) and masters of many, many areas. How many areas, for instance, did you teach when you were here?

Dresser – Oh, about seven.

Weber - Seven areas?

Dresser - Seven.

Johnson – We must have had them buffaloed.

Dresser - I'll tell you one thing that happened though. We can move around from one area fast enough that they couldn't check out the [?].

Weber – I don't believe that. Did you have, did you find the large number of preparations and the difficulty trying to (a) prepare and (b) trying to keep up with what was happening in the field?

Dresser – Well I will tell you one thing too that was a problem, when we taught in shop classes. They weren't given full credit, neither were teacher, the faculty was still 15 hours but you only got half credit. This means that in order to get 15 hours of credits of teaching, knowing how to teach 30. Now this in addition to sometimes 5 preparations, 3 a day, and 5 during the week made it very difficult. Now, not only was that one of the problems, but there was the emphasis of course on advanced degrees where Connie and I were both going to Rutgers at that time, and unfortunately the material that we, that I acquired at Rutgers, didn't dovetail with my teaching at all. In fact it was unrelated, rather foreign, and it was trying to serve two masters. Trying to serve and satisfy the requirements that were imposed on us from Rutgers and at the same time doing a creditable job with students with 5 preparations and 30 hours a week of class contact. I think one of the important things you mentioned about Fred Armstrong was the rapport that he developed with his students. I think one of the first things that was important in order for that rapport to develop was the respect we developed for him. I thought the man was extremely fair. I have seen evidence of it. When students didn't do well academically or made some errors in the shop and so forth he was really tactful in the way he corrected the situation so that in addition to the respect that students had for his knowledge, they respected him as a person and you felt that it wasn't necessary to make an appointment if you had a problem. You can go see Fred Armstrong. You knew he was in his office, very often the door was open, and you would look in his office and get waved in. He had a student secretary very often; it was one of his assistants. He'd dismiss the student secretary so that you can talk freely with him about any kind of a personal problem you might have and he was quite understanding about it and extremely helpful. He was helpful in getting students jobs on campus and he supervised them only far enough where he saw that they were going to turn out

successful and then he left you on your own with the instructions that if you did have a problem to come and see him.

Johnson – I'd like to say this about Mr. Armstrong. When I changed from Music to Industrial Arts, it was a difficult time and I remember I went down to see him and he very, very simply said, "Do you think you can do this kind of work" and I said, "Well, I had some in junior high school, a year in high school and I was always interested in tools and so on" and he said, "Very well, I'll tell you what. You try and I'll help" and I'll tell you that's the best offer I ever had.

Weber- Being helped by a master?

Johnson - Yeah. He was a great help to me.

Weber -That's unusual to consider that a department chairman would go to that extent to work with you. I assume both of you gentlemen did student teaching as part of your undergraduate training. Did Mr. Armstrong supervise you in that process and was it a semester experience or was it a ten-week or how long of an experience was it?

Dresser - A quarter.

Weber - Oh just a quarter?

Dresser - Yes a quarter.

Weber - Of a semester?

Dresser - Right.

Weber -So it wasn't really that long.

Dresser - No it wasn't the full...it wasn't...it was a quarter wasn't it, Connie?

Johnson – Well, it started at a longer experience. Now I can't quite remember if it was a quarter or a semester but I remember doing it because I went back to the teacher I had had in 7<sup>th</sup> grade and it was a very fine person, very well respected, real good craftsman, just a fine person. I had a good time there and learned a lot from the man. We had two student teachings: we had junior year and then we had at least a quarter as seniors and I remember I went to Roselle, NJ, because I could live at home.

Weber - Sports wise: when you were students here, you were on the golf team. Now that's something I didn't find out until a long while into the program.

Johnson – Well, I'll tell you how I got into that. Ham Stillwell, you know him.

Weber -Yes.

Johnson- Hamilton Stillwell. He was the manager of the golf team. And he and I used to take turns running the dishwasher down at the Old Inn. One day he came to me and he said, "I'll run the

dishwasher if you go with the golf team.” It played against Newark. Well, what was I to lose, what could I lose except the golf game? So we went to Newark. I forgot who we played up, someone up there. More interesting even than the golf to me that day was that Mr. Travers had a brother that had a little daughter and she was a violinist. She’s only about this high and they had just purchased for her a three quarters sized violin and it was still too big for her. But she was anxious to hear it played and way back then I was playing the violin so that was an interesting experience. I played that little fiddle and then I asked her what sort of music she was playing. She mentioned a couple of things and she mentioned a Beethoven Romance and so I said “Oh, I’d like to hear you play that” and she said “Which one? The one in F or the one in G?” (Weber – ok) You know, this little girl and she played it beautifully. So I played a number of times with the golf team in various places. We had two tremendous golfers: one big tall burly guy George Field and then a really short fellow, Abe Arnowitz. They were both excellent. So with their help, the team made out pretty well.

Weber - So we’ll continue our excellence in athletics. Vince, you were a tight end. You were football.

Dresser - Football. Yea. I was tackle. Right tackle (Weber-right tackle) and track team.

Weber-I guess the opposing team when they saw you in right tackle must have been disappointed.

Dresser - It didn’t really accomplish anything but more psychologically I think.

Johnson - Typical Vince.

Weber - What? The track is news to me. What event?

Dresser - In shot put, discus and javelin.

Weber- Not the high jump. (laughs)

Dresser – (laughs) No.

Weber - I think you could have done well (laughs).

Dresser - (laughs) Fallen over.

Weber - I understand. Going back to the facilities in Green Hall, when did we make the move to another facility or at what point? Were you both here as professors at that time?

Dresser – Yes, but I wasn’t here in the process of moving. In other words, when I came back as a professor, we were in the present building where you have your wood shop, oh, and machine shop.

Johnson– No, weren’t you here in the other building?

Dresser - I would go over there for just a couple, as a teacher. We had one or two classes there. We had one class downstairs and we soon used it as a drafting room.

Weber- But the move was to the relocatables, where we called the relocatables, (yes) and that's where I've had most of my undergraduate experience and I guess right now that is still being used as a learning center, it's the Hub area.

Dresser - Yeah, I'm not sure what it's being used as. I haven't been over there very often.

Weber- And then there was the move to the current building in '63-'64 but obviously a lot of water went over the dam during that time.

Johnson - A couple of fires out there too in the building that's still up but it burned down a couple years ago.

Weber – Yes, I know. That was tragic because I remember being a freshman-

Johnson – Oh, you were a freshman.

Weber- And we were allowed to go in after the fire to check on, to see if any of our belongings were in any state of use. You know I'll never forget taking my tool box out of the burned out locker and the tools were melted together. It was just a mass of melted tools so we had to start all over in our new building. When Fred Armstrong retired, we had a new chairman come into the department. That person was Bob Worthington. He came from Minnesota as I recall and was part of the program. You people made the move over to the new building.

Dresser - Going back one thing, I don't think we mentioned but at one time, there wasn't any back lake to the campus. There had been a dam that became washed away and the only thing running through there was a stream and during my time, I guess as a sophomore, the state put up a dam and as a result that started to fill up as a lake. The only thing about it is there were tall cattails that were growing there and even though the lake became filled and frozen, these cattails still stuck out of the lake and one of the fellows of the IA department brought a lawnmower and he was trying to go over the ice to cut off the cattails since it was frozen and we had pictures of that someplace.

Johnson – We couldn't have gone to the cops at that time because of the cattails.

Weber - I thought I did crazy things when I was an undergrad.

Dresser - We all ate at the Inn. Connie, you can supplement something about that. Umm...when did that burn down? The College was closed or delayed for a month.

Johnson - It didn't really burn down. It was destroyed, part of it was destroyed and then they put on a big addition and accommodated a cafeteria.

Dresser – Oh, that's when that happened. That happened before I became a student.

Weber - Now the Old Inn served as a primarily dining hall, it wasn't a dorm, it was primarily a dining hall.

Dresser and Johnson – Primarily, yeah.

Weber - And all the students at the College at that time ate at the Old Inn.

Dresser - You came full dressed, tablecloths, and it was an interesting affair particularly for some of the kids who had come there like me who had never had to be dressed for dinner and so forth. It was another experience. So it was a period of development but besides the academics, I guess the social development probably is as important as the academic and that's I think what helped me.

Weber- And there was a dress code?

Johnson - Oh yeah, you wore a jacket and a tie, sat down at the table and you were served. It was all very nice.

Dresser- And you always sat with three pretty girls at your table since men were in the minority and women were the majority. Why there were always three girls that you had to sit with which I much rather sit with the fellows but you had no choice.

Weber - I got you covered. I experienced the same problem when I was an undergraduate student here at Trenton State but now since it's gone to a multipurpose institution, the male/female proportion have come up, (Dresser - evened out) evened out. When we look at the administrative structure of the College in the early 40s and late 40s, how did things run? Did the President call meetings? Did you have departmental meetings scheduled on a periodic basis? How did that work?

Johnson – I guess Mr. Armstrong and I had regular meetings. They took place on the way to lunch and on the way back.

Weber – Ok, so you took time out for lunch.

Johnson – Yeah, we would take time for lunch.

Dresser – Well how many people were here on the faculty when you came in the department?

Johnson - In the department?

Dresser – Yes.

Johnson – Well, it was Mr. Armstrong. Well, I had Mr. Armstrong as a teacher and there was Jim Crawford and when he resigned to go to Temple that's when I came here in '42.

Weber- And so really, when Armstrong went about hiring both of you, he knew of your potential as a result of you having gone through the program.

Dresser - Yes, I think he probably, it was probably just as well to take a chance on us as it was for some unknown who wanted it.

Johnson – Well, he was very optimistic.

Weber - How about access to the president of the college?

Dresser - Connie had more experience...

Johnson – Well, it was easy. He had an office in Green Hall and had a door with an opaque, not opaque but you couldn't see through them except for the middle panel and you walk up to there and look in and he would feel your presence and go like that and you go in to see the President and you could do it anytime. (Weber- it was that simple) It was easy. Yea.

Weber – Impressive.

Dresser - Well, the entire college met in Kendall Hall every Tuesday for an hour (Johnson -for assembly, it was required) and there was a list taking the role of the seats that if there was an empty seat, it better not be your name that was assigned to that seat because you would have heard about it. But you can get an appreciation of the size of the college where the entire faculty and student body could fit in Kendall.

Weber -Alright so it involved both students and faculty.

Johnson - Oh yes. In justice, I have to say that there were a lot of interesting programs. They had outside speakers on a variety of topics and the one that made an impression on me was a man who demonstrated making wooden shoes and years later, when I wanted to do it myself, just by the merest coincidence, I actually wrote to that man without knowing it. When I wanted to do it, I just happened upon a Popular Science article about a man who makes wooden shoes and he was pictured there and it was in Holland, Michigan, so I wrote to the man getting his name from the magazine and sure enough I got a reply and after four or five letters, I had a set of tools from him.

Weber- And I remember the outstanding demonstrations that you put on during our fall conferences. When did those fall conferences which still, by the way, running those conferences, when did they start?

Johnson - Well, they started way back....I remember participating in them before I graduated and one interesting thing and I'm sorry I didn't bring along but every student was required to submit a drawing for some kind of a project: wood, metal, whatever...and that was put into a folder and this reminds me they were sold at the fall conference in order to buy the offset machine (Dresser - offset machine, which was \$150.)

Weber – So the idea of involving students, undergraduate students in organizing the professional conference, or the conference you people ran, then called a Fall conference, was in fact something that started way back....

Johnson - I remember first time I was aware of Vince and he was this tall looking guy cutting spirals on the table saw, on the table saw.

Dresser - Couldn't do it now but...(laughs)



Weber - So we moved through the era of Fred Armstrong and we move then to Robert Worthington which was the next chairperson of the department. Was he influential in putting of the newest and present facility together, the Fred Armstrong Hall?

Dresser – Yes, he was.

Johnson - Mr. Armstrong was a doer, if anything needed fixing on the building he did it, even sent for the maintenance department. He just went about his job quietly and thoroughly and Worthington was a promoter. He knocked the socks of the business manager by declaring “I need \$5,000 and I need it right away.” Five thousand dollars in 1958?! (Weber- that’s a lot of money) \$5000, that was a lot of money, so after Quimby got over his shock, finally Worthington got, oh he got everything he asked for and he really promoted for the department. He got us a lot of stuff.

Dresser – Yes, he did.

Johnson - He really did.

Weber - I heard you mention Quimbly...Quimbly being the business...

Johnson - Quimby, John, John .Quimby

Weber - Quimby

Johnson - Quimby was the business manager.

Weber - And thus the Prairie.

Johson – Oh well...that ...

Weber - Any connection there?

Johnson – Yeah, that lawn was his. He didn’t want it disturbed so it became known as Quimby’s Prairie and I hear it, I’ve laughed about this many times, that term came up as sort of derision. You know, Quimby’s Prairie, don’t put a foot on it and now I hear it mentioned by various people and in programs it will take place on Quimby’s Prairie. I had no idea where the term came from.

Weber - As an undergraduate student there was some kind of unwritten law about not walking across this until you were, could you do it as a senior or you couldn’t do it all?

Johnson – No, you weren’t supposed to walk across it but they did have the candlelight service, the Junior/Senior Candlelight. Do you remember that?

Dresser – Yes, I do remember.

Johnson -I don’t know what they do anymore but there was a group of the upcoming seniors were on the steps of Green Hall and the graduating people were on the steps of the library so they sang to one

another across the alley. It was quite a program and it went on number of years. I don't know when they terminated but then people would use the lawn but during the year you didn't walk on the lawn.

Weber – Impressive.

Johnson – Yes, and it was a beautiful lawn. Always nice and green....

Weber -It still is a central point of our campus, although we had to put a number of walkways through.

Dresser - You are familiar with the graduate program, you were probably one of the first students in the graduate program.

Weber - I guess I went on after graduation in '64, decided to stay on for another year as a grad assistant that was based on the advice of you two gentlemen who told me to stay on.

Dresser - You see we were talking about Worthington, so I was giving him credit for initiating the program.

Weber- It probably then started when he arrived in '58.

Dresser - I think '58 he came, yes.

Weber -And he did an excellent job of running the show.

Dresser - He did.

Weber - How did you people go about getting promoted? The promotions process now here at Trenton State is a very complex and tense experience, extremely difficult in some cases to get promoted to rank.

Dresser -I'll tell you how it happened to me. I was a chaperone at a dance and Mr. West the President was also attending and during the intermission he came up to me and said "Why don't you put in for a promotion?" and I did and was promoted. So that was a very elaborate process.

Weber - Did involve any kind of resume writing or was it....?

Dresser - I just had to hand in a list of the graduate courses that I had taken and make sure that I had the required 32 hours or 35 or above the M.A.

Weber - Was that true for you, too, Connie?

Johnson – Well, I came as an instructor and then during the War, I wasn't here. I worked at a high school because there weren't any jobs for people. When I came back in '45 I came back as assistant professor so that happened very nicely. And then things just went along and one day Mr. West called me to the office and this is going to knock the socks off of many people who want promotions. He said, "I want to give you a promotion but you need two more credits. Go get them and let me know when you got them." So I went to Rutgers, took a course, came back and showed him I had the credits and that's how I got promoted.

Weber- So those days it was a one person promotions committee.

Johnson – Well, Mr. West knew what was going on and he knew what he was doing.

Dresser - It was relatively small too.

Johnson - Yeah. It was small. He knew. You know? He knew what people were doing and knew where and when he can get things done and so on.

Weber- You know, I frequently complain in the current, in my current situation, regarding large number of preparations. I typically teach three different courses in the Fall and three different courses in the Spring and I find it sometimes difficult to keep up with all the other duties as well as be well prepared for class. Were things any different for you gentlemen when you were coming through the program in terms of number of preps that you had to work with and trying to keep up with the technological knowledge?

Johnson- Well when I came, there were just two people. We did wood shop, what you call it now but we had machine shop, and we had print shop, we had mechanical drawing, and we had the stage to take care of, and student teaching. Oh that's enough. So we kind of whacked those up among us and for the first year we were here, I didn't know which end was up, trying to get things ready. I had been in a junior high school in Toms River for 6 years and that was quite different than coming here. So I was busy all the time but then I think I guess I got the break of the deal because as more people came, I was left in the wood lab. And after many years, I don't know, from the 60s on, I guess I had that except for a little of student teaching but other than that....

Weber - You were known as the [?] man for many many years and I guess you probably, certainly, took the advice Fred Armstrong who said get good at something, learn something well because I remember that if there was anything you wanted to know about wood, there was a resident expert on campus.

Johnson - Oh. We use that word expert very liberally around here (laughs).

Weber - When I first made your acquaintance, I guess it was in a drafting class and I also think I made your acquaintance in a power mechanics class and you were also involved in graphic arts. So you were spread pretty thin.

Dresser- Yeah we had electronics.

Weber – Electronics.

Dresser - And then we had other courses like instruction and strength of material of concrete and then we introduced another course which was heating and air conditioning. And the thing about those courses, you never had enough for two sections. It would be just one section so you would have one preparation and then another group for graphic arts and another group for auto mechanics so that it was preparation was not only difficult but keeping up with what was new in the area was difficult and what I always tried to do and we did it together was when Ford gave a seminar on the factory, we would

take off and go there. In the summer time that was, of course, and go for the week or two and then General Motors would offer the same, especially when they came out with something new in transmissions, coverage and electronic [?] and so forth.

Weber – Yeah, I remember.

Dresser - That was really the only way you can keep up because the textbooks would have been behind before they came out with the information and you wanted to kind of update kids so they would be prepared for what was actually going on even if we didn't have all the equipment to test what malfunctions existed in automatic transmission.

Weber - Ok. The new building, which I guess I had moved into that new building in '63-'64. That was the state of the art facility I would think based on going from Green Hall to the relocatable buildings and then moving into this state of the art facility. What were some of your impressions as a result? How long did it take you to get up to speed getting into this new building?

Dresser - What I think Worthington did before we actually moved in, we took some trips around the country during the summertime, during Easter vacation, and Christmas, to see what was going on with other modern facilities in Industrial Arts. And we after having seen what was now being updated that was a clue as to how we suggested designing the new building and with the program in mind that determined then the planning for the new facility. (Weber- Ok.) Now one of the difficulties of course was getting equipment because you couldn't have at the amount of money that was available at the time. It was either the choice of having a large building with antiquated equipment moving it from the old facilities or having a small building with modern equipment and Worthington had the philosophy that once the building is built, you're stymied. It's difficult to add to it but if you had a large building there's a better possibility of getting new equipment as needed and updating the program relative to the equipment which is probably a good philosophy.

Weber –Yeah, I would suspect that the building has been well designed because we are now as of 1991 putting an addition on to the front of the building so we had almost a period of almost 25 years in which it served the department extremely well. Connie, I can recall as an undergraduate student and even perhaps as a colleague, that you had, you took the advantage of the opportunity to go across the ocean and I thought to myself, my wife has often suggested that maybe I might do that and it sounds like an exciting thing. I think you did it twice. Could you give us some ideas as to what was in your mind, when you decided you wanted to go to Germany to teach the Industrial Arts?

Johnson - Is that World War II coming?

(Everyone laughs)

Weber - That was after World War II. (laughs)

Johnson - Well I look back on it and can't believe that it happened to me because when I remember as a youngster, only the rich people went away. It was far beyond anything we could hope for but when I came here, people went away on exchange programs, covering wood[?] for example and leaving us. I

thought well, it's about time I try something like that and I started to write around to various agencies and so on and I got the most prompt reply from the Air Force and they invited me to come to New York City for an interview and there again that was very difficult. I went over there and it seems like there was a school in Wiesbaden, Germany that couldn't be....what do you call it?

Weber - Certified?

Johnson - Certified because they didn't have a shop program (Weber- Ah)I didn't know that but when I went over, I took some pictures over and took them a couple of references and the man looked them over and he asked me one question. He said "Where the hell where you last year?" (laughs) and that was it. He put his name on something or other and that was it. I went to Wiesbaden, Germany for two years. I had a leave from the College and I had to go for two years because if I went for one year I would have to pay for the family and all the transportation. If I agreed to go for two years, they'd pay for it. Everything was provided, house and whole works. So we had a good two years in Wiesbaden, Germany which was a hub which was great because we could get a car, we had a four cylinder German Ford, got about 40 miles of gallon and I paid 13 cents a gallon for gas. So we went to Rome, we went to Paris. We went to Austria, Sweden, Denmark. We even went to Britain during that year, during breaks and we can go up and down, up one side the Rhine and down the other side. It was a wonderful place and the job was easy enough because I, well we had to establish a shop, I had some seventh, eighth, ninth and some high school people. We made things out of wood and there it was easy because there were so many things in shop stores beautifully made wooden items from all over the world and I had a source of the music works that goes in music classes so it was easy to keep the kids interested because we put those in all kind of things, little houses and little churches and even on a rocking chair. We had a source where we can buy it for 50 cents a piece or something like that.

Weber – Inexpensive.

Johnson – Yea. And then I came back here to the College in '58 and then in '64, the College established the faculty exchange, faculty/student exchange with Frankfurt, Germany and during that first summer of that program, Franz Geierhaas organized the student study group in Germany and I went with him as an assistant and we spent 11 weeks in Germany, travelling all over the place so I have that experience and then in '66 Trenton State College established an exchange program with Dundee, Scotland. Well, I was very lucky to get in on that and that was a wonderful year. We enjoyed Scotland and then that program folded up unfortunately. Mainly, and the only reason was because the Scots couldn't afford to come here. They just couldn't afford to come here. Their salary wasn't anywhere near ours and they either had financial programs or elderly parents they couldn't leave or young children so it lasted only three years.

Weber - Were you required to learn the German language as a result of the exchange?

Johnson - Well I always worked on it as a hobby.

Weber - I remember you doing that.

Johnson - It was a hobby and then in '79 I was the exchange in Frankfurt, Germany and I had a shop, well it wasn't much of a shop but it wasn't too bad. I knew a little German and I could always say in German if I couldn't explain it, I'd say, "Come on I'll show you."

Weber - Okay, so you used tools.

Johnson - It wasn't a case of teaching English where you have to sit in a chair and talk for two hours. I spent three hours at a time with these people all morning in the class and I could get by and if I didn't know the words or I couldn't put them together, I'd just go I'll show you how it goes. It went quite well. We have a lot of friends over there. In fact, last week we had German visitors, a couple. The girl was an exchange- oh no, was a foreign student here in 1955.

Weber - So that was the connection?

Johnson - Yeah, that was the connection and the next two years we spent in Germany and so we got to know her and her relatives and some school people and we've been visited back and forth numerous times and one time we visited them in Turkey for a week and their son, by the way, is a student here in the business department.

Weber - Oh yes, we talked about that last week. Yes, I remember. How about students here at Trenton State....

Dresser - In 1949, when I came back here at the College, we had about 35-39 students (Weber - majors Total?) Total and in about 1958-1959, we had 100 freshman (Weber - 100 freshman?) 100 freshman, four sections of 25 people in a section so it's amazing how the population of the College grew in our department. After they became sophomores, again we had another heavy freshman class so that we must have had at one time 250 students in our department.

Weber - There must have been a tremendous demand for Industrial Arts teachers in the early 60s. As I can remember applying to Trenton State and it was kind of a happenstance that we already alluded to, I initially had applied to Science and I was put on a waiting list, so then they said why don't you look at your second choice and my second choice, I didn't really know what to put down so I put down Health and Physical Education. I went to a floor test and I promptly failed my floor test. So my brother at that time was going to Trenton State so I said John find out what's open and what areas are they looking for students and one of the areas was Industrial Arts. So Bernie Reed interviewed me and based on that I was admitted as a possible borderline candidate for.

Dresser - We were quite selective.

Weber - But nowadays we're struggling with our enrollments based on trying to attract students that would meet our very high admissions standards who want to become teachers at the current salary ranges but apparently in the early 60s that wasn't a problem.

Johnson - There was no competition for salary. There wasn't quite the difference.

Weber- Yeah, in other words the salary in the early 60s were looked upon at being very good and I think even perhaps the profession of teaching may have been afforded more respect in the 60s than perhaps it receives in the 90s.

Dresser – And there were a lot of people coming out of the service and jobs are not plentiful and a lot of these people have lived through the Depression when their parents have been employed and the jobs folded up and then they became unemployed and those people who were fortunate to have jobs as teachers or working in the post office and so forth they were secure so and sought after positions and many people clambered after that security so that when these people came out of the service and they have this kind of background and memories from their parents. They thought that the security was just as important as their salary and I think teaching was an area which they became interested in.

Weber - That's interesting that you mention security because that is probably something that teaching lacks today in terms many first year teachers will get pink slips part way through their first year of teaching which obviously doesn't help their security.

Dresser - You know, I often thought that when the student goes to the College, they are guided quite carefully but after they get out, they are on their first teaching job they are left on their own to sink or swim. It would be...I have often thought that it would be a nice program that somehow some of first year teachers could come back to the College one day a month and talk to some people they know even if they talk to themselves of how some of their problems that they're experiencing might be resolved. Because I felt at a loss having been in this environment and having people to go to like Fred Armstrong if I had a problem and then going out in a situation where I was the only shop teacher in the school, in the whole area ,there was no one to go to for any kind advice and you hesitate to expose your ignorance by talking to someone else about it who was a Phys. Ed. teacher or something else depending what the situation was but if I had the opportunity to come back to the College at least it would have reinforced what I was doing and I would have felt more secure in the program that I was carrying out even if they told me to do the same thing I was doing. Because I think security in the position, knowing what you're doing, adds confidence to it and has a tendency to make you more successful.

Johnson – Mr. Armstrong recognized that need when the shop teachers in the 50s, when there was such a need for shop teachers, they took people from industry and Mr. Armstrong had a class he called the ten week wonders. He took those people and taught them everything they need to know in ten weeks. That was the joke of it but they came for ten weeks, then they took a job but then he had them come back regularly and meet with him so he recognized that aspect.

Weber - I see. Gentlemen, we are approaching the end of our tape and our series here and perhaps we can leave with perhaps some words of advice for people like myself who are working in the area of teaching and maybe one or both of you might want to comment, what advice might you give a starting professor in terms of your vast experience of teaching and working here..

Dresser - The only thing that I will say, Robert, is that the situation may change, the students may change, the equipment may change, and the philosophies will change but the thing that's going to always remain is the relationship that exists between the faculty member and a student. These are the

things I remember the most about my graduate and undergraduate programs is how did I relate and what contributions did the faculty member make to me. I may have forgotten anything he taught and I wasn't really impressed by that as time went on but the fact is that some of the things he did, we went on a field trip where someone was making molds, injection mold for model airplanes. They're the kinds of the things that I remember long after the classes are over. I even forgot what the name of the class was that was supposed to attend but the activity was what I remember and the concern that the faculty member had for me and in my development and the rapport that I had with the student is the most important factor that I think and I think at Christmas time when I would get all the Christmas cards from all over the world of students who had been that's really a shot in the arm and that really makes the whole job worthwhile.

Weber – That's worth more (Dresser –it really is) than a salary income. That brings me back to the thought that Connie mentioned when he first started here at Trenton State and the willingness of Mr. Armstrong to help him, to work with him, and I think that thought is something that perhaps all professors should work with, this concept of maybe it's not really important what you're teaching but it's the connection you make with your students and helping them to solve their problems

Dresser - I remember one of the students came to me, a fraternity member, and I would get a list of the kids that were are doing well in college and those who were failing and I would look at the list and kind of keep them in mind and encourage those that needed it and congratulated those who were successful. And one fellow named George, I congratulated him on having done so well, made the Dean's list. He said "You know, I just did that to please Mr. Armstrong". I think that was the greatest compliment that any student can pay, "I did it to please Mr. Armstrong."

Weber - That was motivation.

Dresser – That sure was.

Weber – Gentlemen, on behalf of Trenton State College, my heartfelt thanks to both of you for spending some time with us today and putting your thoughts on tape and I'm certain that the future generations will appreciate the combined wisdom and experience of 60 years here at Trenton State College.

Weber – Connie, thank you.

Johnson –Thank you, Bob.

Weber – Thank you.

Dresser - Thank you. I feel 50 years younger.



