

CENTER FOR FLORIDA HISTORICAL
ORAL HISTORICAL RECORDS

ORAL INTERVIEW WITH: Professor Robert MacDonald

INTERVIEWER: James M. Denham

PLACE OF INTERVIEW: Orlando, Florida

DATE OF INTERVIEW: December 1, 1991

M, James M. Denham - M/01
R, Professor Robert MacDonald

M: Today's December 1 (1991) and I'm once again here with Robert MacDonald. We're continuing our conversations regarding his oral history and his life. Mr. MacDonald, you are today

R: "The. Ten/ 20%.

M: Before we started this 20% memory of the fine arts series that at 20% 8% to get here at "Orlando, Florida" I would like for you to talk a little bit about President Charles T. Ruff. What was he like as a resident and also you was 20% relations 8 4% 6

R: "First of all) as I met him as I described before in 7% of Hill "alls) Pennsylvanian 4 here he was 5% and I was 8% and a summer) I just had a brief first impression) not enough time to decide that I would really think about him permanently. When I came for that concert) I did meet him and as I expressed that the fact that he had been the assistant to Ladd 852. When I came here) I just missed Dr. 852. It is 4% when I was here on that concert trip) he had just 5% recently 8% 42. I was sorry to see he missed that.

I was glad to /no4 somebody 4% had been an administrator to him during that time. He couldn't have been more different I guess. I remember that in 1950 because I was from South Carolina) 4% miles over the state line from North Carolina) /no4% that he was from North Carolina) I was fascinated by the fact that he had been to the 5% of 1% cao. His manner was an 2% and 1% a 1% of that place) a person familiar 4% 1% cao. He had done some remarkable things and he was 4% from 1% cao. He had met Dr. Snodgrass and he made him 5% resident here. I should have /no4n from that to expect the 1% 8% from Charles T. Ruff. I should be the last person to say that because after all) I came from a 5% similar background. If an 2% 1%) even more rural than 4% that he had been) 1% miles from the nearest town) 4% 8% the cotton fields of South Carolina.

M: Would you say that he was a little bit of a fact or feared a bit of a fact or believed a bit of a fact? He would describe him

R: It was a long time before I had really learned that that full relationship was there. I had still to learn that that was a formidable ally to be a little bit about 20% leader) especially an academic. I was not prepared for the fact that. I had just often of the matter) I had been drafted into the Army (force) and there were several things that ran/.

M: No questions as/ed.

R: That should have been the personal place to me) foreman to me. What was foreman to me were that at the resident would be so > a little) he was a little to a man who was /no4n as a legend. It was that a person who would be an assistant or vice; resident then saw a man as the head of the) must be very personal. He was personal in his inconsistencies.

M: Okay. He was inconsistent. He so

R: He approached the things of that were nature) intellectual or semi; intellectual or that were) as a person who of 20% allowed in the room and heard him speak/ and a &ro%8 around the table) 20% would have decided that he was Mr. "arm 702 !ome to To4n. It took me a while to learn that that was the /end of the matter that he wanted to have.

M: In other words) self-effacing

R: Not so much so as being a little bit of a person and /ee8n& that so that the accent of his. Because of that) I got over learning the anacronism of the fact that he turned out to be quite an intellectual man. In fact) that was later that I learned that he was a little bit of a stor2 of "lorda) 4 %c) I think / 20% I agree that me) is outstanding.

M: Yes. So do you have any other 5#5#d memories of President T r#ft6

R: Yes. To illustrate the /end of anacronism of the fact that his name was so false in nature and that his mind so =%c/) that was interesting and general to see the reactions of people from another part of the country who were not aware that was an anacronism. I &re4 %8 in the \$o%t . I /ne4 that slowly) draw&#n& in the conversation had not in to do that his level of intelligence.

M: So that was 4a2 to describe that would be slow tal/ and fast then/.

R: Yes. Slow tal/ and fast then/ . Probably capable even to do parallels that form/lat and his to%&ts about the person he was tal/ and to. When I had a chance to go a year abroad) then the 2nd ad the Association of M;d; "lorda

! olle&es;;

M: "re#b%r&6

R: "re#b%r&) 2es. 7eca%se 4e 4ere a5#n& someone from #s colle&e) e

an2t #n& to do 4#t or&an#A#n& #t as far as I /no4. T ere 4as t e more liberal and 8ro&ress#5e elements of t e En&l#s de8artment for #nstance bac/ t en.

M: ! an 2o% remember an2 of t ose 8eo8le6

R: ?es. T e one 4 o ta%& t #n t e En&l#s de8artment and t eater) I can't t #n/ of er name 9%st no4.

M: \$o t e e5ent t at 4as 8lanned) #t 4as 8r#mar#l2 8lanned b2 some fac%lt2) a fe4 fac%lt2 and also st%dents as 4ell6

R: ?es. T ere 4as an En&l#s de8artment lad2 and #t 4as cam8%#s 4#de #nsofar led b2 a 5er2 fe4 8eo8le. T e adm#n#strat#on bac/ t en 4as m%c more 8ro #b#ted t an no4) as t e 8res#dent 4as) so man2 of t em 4ere afra#d to t #n/ d#fferentl2 #n 8%bl#c. \$o 5er2 fe4 s o4ed %8. \$o #t 4as cons#dered almost a dar#n& t #n& to &o to t at meet#n&. We st#ll a5e) as 2o% /no4) latel2 some rac#al t #n&s t at seem to t ro4 %s bac/ #n t#me a lot more t an 4e3d l#e to adm#t. T at 4as a s%8er) s%8er #ntense s#t%at#on #n t ose da2s. In fact) I don't t #n/ 4e ad an2 blac/ st%dents on cam8%#s.

M: \$o d#d 2o% act%all2 attend t at e5ent6

R: O) 2es.

M: And 4 en 2o% left t at e5ent and 2o% 4ent ome) 4 at a88ened6

R: W en I 4ent ome) t at 4as 4 en I 4as resol5ed after all. We m%st &et a4a2) I 9%st co%ldn't ta/e t at emot#onal d#c otom2 bet4een 4 at 2o% felt abo%t t e deat of Mart#n L#t er E#n& be#n& one of t e lead#n& 8oss#b#l#t#es to ma/e 8ro&ress 4#t rac#al d#scr#m#nat#on) a5#n& #m act%all2 /#lled) t at 4as absol%tel2 ;;

M: \$o 4 at 4as #t abo%t t at da2 #n La/eland t at &a5e 2o% 8a%se) 4 at a88ened 4#t 2o%r ne<t door ne#& bor) 4as #t6

R: ?es) #t 4as. He ad been a 5er2 lead#n& m#n#ster of a Met od#st c %rc and 4e l#/ed #m 5er2 m%c and #s 4#fe as 4ell. In fact) 4 en And2 @r#ff#t came) t e2 &a5e a 4onderf#l d#nner for #m beca%se e5er2bod2 #n t at Aone ad alread2 4ors #88ed And2 @r#ff#t . T at 4as bas#call2 t e ma#n t #n& abo%t #t.

M: \$o t e2 4ere 5er2 ne&at#5e abo%t do#n& an2t #n& l#e t at6

R: Ver2 m%c so. ?o% remember 4 en I =%oted t e 4#fe as sa2#n&: .J%st #ma#ne) Mr. MacDonald) t e23re carr2#n& on o5er t at ne&ro.0 l3m not 8rono%nc#n& #t r#& t l3m s%re. T e2 4ere 5er2) 5er2 n#ce 8eo8le. I 4as &ett#n& %sed to t e anac ron#sm) some of t e n#cest 8eo8le I /ne4 st#ll are com#n& from

the soft ad that problem.

M: O/a2. Mr. MacDonald) 4 at 4ere some of 2o%r d%t#es b2 t e end of t e late DC+s6 ?o% ad ceased be#n& 9%st merel2 art#st #n res#dence) no4 2o% 4ere ta/#n& o5er t e m%#c de8artment and as t e decade came to a close) 4 at 4ere some of 2o%r d%t#es at t at t#me6

R: "rst of all) #t 4o%ld be ard to ta/e 4 at l#m sa2#n& abo%t 4 at ad not been %8 %nt#l t en and 4 at l #n#t#ated) t #s so%nds terr#bl2 e&ot#st#cal b%t t #n/ of #t t #s 4a2 #f 2o% 4#l) onl2 to t e fact t at #t 4as t r%st %8on me to be t e ead of t e de8artment) ne5er e<8ect#n& to) I learned so m%#c more abo%t 4 at 4as not 8resent #n o%r m%#c de8artment. In fact) so lttle t at t ere 4as not an2 t o%& t of belon&#n& to a nat#onal assoc#at#on 4o%ld a5e been o%t of t e =%est#on. T ere 4as no bona f#de m%#c #stor2 co%rse. ! an 2o% en5#s#on a de8artment of m%#c and 4e ad ne5er ad a sen#or rec#tal or a 9%n#or rec#tal6

As I be&an to loo/ #nto #t) I 4as embarrassed b2 t e fact t at I ad e5en come ere. If I ad /no4n t en 4 at) #n t ose ne<t 4ee/s and mont s learned) I 4o%ld a5e ne5er acce8ted) I 4o%ld a5e acce8ted to 8la2 anot er concert ma2be b%t ne5er c an&ed m2 l#fe. I t #n/ I told 2o% t at l#n&#d and I 4ere so s/e8t#cal abo%t #t) 4e /e8t t e rental a8artment arran&ement #n Man attan as lon& as 4e co%ld to be s%re 4e 4anted to sta2.

M: Well) 2es) tal/ abo%t t at a lttle b#t and) of co%rse) 4 at 4e 9%st ment#oned 4#t re&ard to t e Mart#n L#t er E#n& e5ent. D#d 2o% e5er ser#o%sl2 consider lea5#n& 2o%r frst t ree or fo%r 2ears6

R: Reall2 d#d. I e<8ect t at #f I ad not ad t at t r%st %8on me) I do some of m2 best 4or/ 4 en l#m faced 4#t somet #n& t at #s al#en to me. Not #n& co%ld a5e been at t at 8o#nt #n m2 l#fe as al#en as t e t o%& t of be#n& an adm#n#strator #n a colle&e m%#c de8artment.

M: On t e ot er and) #t m#& t a5e been e<c#t#n&) ere 2o% a5e a c ance to create somet #n& from scratc) 2o% don't a5e somebod2 t at 2o% a5e to c an&e t e s2stem or 2o% a5e to re8lace #f t at 8erson 4as &ood. ?o% ad t e c ance to reall2 b%#ld #t on 2o%r o4n and see t e 8rod%ct of #t.

R: Act%all2) I 4as t e 8rod%ct of 4 at ad not been. As I too/ o5er d#5#d#n& bet4een t e teac #n& and adm#n#strat#on 4as so ne4 to me) I 4as tal/#n& to l#n&#d abo%t t #s fa#r l2 latel2) #t's 8robabl2 4onderf%l t at l /ne4 as lttle as l /ne4 abo%t #t. I ne5er ad to t #n/ from 4ee/ to 4ee/ or mont to mont to dread t #s) t at or t e ot er t at 4as com#n& a ead. E5er2 da2 I 4as 9%st sort of fend#n& for self and tr2#n& to 4or/ m2 4a2 o%t of t #s %n/no4n terr#tor2.

W ere 4e be&an 4as 8%tt#n& me on t e c%rr#c%l%#m comm#ttee. I remember m2 frst da2 on t at comm#ttee) t e2 co%ld a5e been s8ea/#n& lo4er \$lo5a/#an) I

a5e no #dea abo%t academ#c lan&%a&e at t at 8o#nt. \$o I be&an to learn o%t of necess#t2.

M: \$o 4 at 4ere some of 2o%r 4orst memor#es6

R: I t #n/ 2o% alread2 ant#c#8ated t at) m2 best memor#es) bas#call2 t e e<c#tment after &ett#n& to t e 8res#dent o4 l#ttle t ere 4as to t e m%S#c de8artment or o4 m%c 4e 4ere m#ss#n&) #t became a real e&o tr#8 beca%se I felt l#/e t e Mess#a t at ad been 4a#ted on. An2t #n& I d#d 4as #ncred%lo%. We ad ne5er ad a sen#or rec#tal. T ere 4as one \$te#n4a2 8#ano and #f I carr#ed on abo%t t #s before) fore me) b%t I 9%st 4al/ed b2 t #s morn#n& a co%8le of t e 8ract#ce rooms) and t e fact t at 4e came from one beat %8 \$te#n4a2 8#ano) to a o%se f%ll of t em and a5#n& t e lar&est collect#n) e5er2 one of 4 #c 4as reac ed b2 be#n& as n#ce as I can to al%mn# or to 4ealt 2 residents of t e comm%n#t2) I don't /no4 o4 I learned to s4eet tal/) 8roof a&a#n t at necess#t2 #s t e mot er of #n5ent#on and I d#d.

I 4as also comb#n#n& t e fact t at I ad s#&ned 4#t an a&enc2 #n Atlanta for cont#n%#n& m2 concerts and t e2 4ere boo/#n& me for a 4 ole season at a t#me #n concerts all o5er. T e bea%t2 of t at 4as #t t#rned o%t to be not s#c an anac ron#sm after all. I 4as able to obser5e man2 ot er de8artments and to &et an #dea. Of co%rse ne5er a5#n& to adm#t o4 man2 t #n&s 4ere total2 %n/no4n to me and ne4 to me b%t I co%ld tra5el bac/ ome and /no4 beca%se #t 4o%ld a5e been d#ff#c%lt 9%st to &o to c%rr#c%l%mm comm#ttee meet#n& #n a 8lace 4 ere t e2 ad ne5er been or at least not #n t e reco&n#Aable 8ast tense before I ad come.

\$o I learned from all t ese ot er 5#s#ts bes#des 8la2#n& concerts at t em and &o#n& to !at ol#c sc ools) 8rotestant sc ools) all o5er t e co%ntr2) I learned to &et an #dea. We ad ne5er ad a 4ee/I2 st%dent rec#tal. T at met 4#t 8rotests to a certa#n n#mber of t e fac%lt2. One of t e 8ersons 4 o made #t e0d07%4% 4o%o%5#n&A&AR4o%

but if there had been one) I could have been the head of it. He could also
rearrange and time his as a job. So to use that and his brother to me.
We seemed to be the same and he had come from a large number
here. I forget his name but he became the head of a desert
man's (42s) but Jack/ Hoots really seemed to be responsible for his be-
enforced and to stay. As I said) I could time his. I think he tal-
eased me during the campaign.

M: I can tell you about it and the circumstances to it and that all
transpired

R: Look back and forward to the 4 years) to use his to the committee
meeting and the 8th year and me who had been in education for 2 years and 2 years
I went to sort of my start in the 4th and I did that rather fast. Very soon
we were able to have senior recitals. We needed to have a complete music
course) a music curriculum. I was able to get that. We had the 4 of 4 were
certainly capable of doing it) if not deal with it) they had not been called upon
and this remark/able to me that 20% are in a place that is out of step with the rest
of academe) so 20% could be as bright as a button but still sort of get
comfortable with it. I suppose maybe the most unusual thing about me
achievement could be that I was so devastated by the lack of it) that or the
other that I just felt for many years that I was so devastated by the lack of it
that I could hardly breathe.

I remember our band director from 7th to 4th) caused me to be very depressed
because he had one student) Darrin Parsons (as his name) and 20% maybe
heard that name) that was a boy's name in Met (odism) his father was a minister
Darrin was a marvelous tenor and he was tall and thin) that could be the best thing
of a degree at that time. He was tall and a conductor and course) he didn't have
a band. I can 20% make a department that envisions itself as an end of music
department that didn't have a band. As little as I love basic band) but all 42s
be in an orchestra band) I just could have never;; I was absolutely
devastated by the fact that he didn't have one. I talked to the band director in
Winter Haven and he agreed to take Darrin Parsons on.

Well) he called me 8) I think a few/ or 40 later and said: I need to talk to 20%)
then can I come over and talk to 20% He sat me down and I could have one
one of 40 42s) either I could have said to myself enamored) 4) I did) I see
& not to do something and about it) so I could just say this) no less than that) he made
of it) so; called music department) there's no one for me. Instead of that) I was
enforced by his attitude. He caused me basically I suppose to stay and have
others to build a department.

then the orchestra was 20% of the total (I think) for 40 years) I had to have mentioned 42s still) that

Ne4 ?or/ 4 #c ad st%8endo% s for sc ools 4 o d#d not a5e orc estras and
t #n&s l#/e t at. \$o l 4as able to &et on t at not onl2 #n t at 4a2 for o%r sa/e
ere b%t l 4as boo/ed t en b2 t #s a&enc2 all o5er t e co%nr2. l 8la2ed concerts
#n rec#tal alls and on cam8%ses and ne5er ad a rec#tal to 8laces t at 4ere 5er2
le&endar2 8ract#call2. 7eca%se t e2 all 4o%ld ta/e a concert t at 4as free to
t em. M2 ent#re fee and m2 tra5el 4ere 8a#d for b2 t #s assoc#at#on of colle&es.
T at 4as 8robabl2 s#m%ltaneo%sl2 m2 best 4a2 of /ee8#n& %8 m2 art#st#c
re=%#rements for 8erform#n& #n m2 adm#n#strat#5e re=%#rements.

W en l loo/ bac/) l %st can't bel#e5e t e n%mb#r of t#mes t at l 4o%ld &et ome
at (:++ #n t e morn#n& from be#n& #n m2 st%d#o 4or/#n& and tr2#n& to establ#s a
c%rr#c%l% m for t at 9ob. l 4onder o4 l d#d #t) l co%ldn't of co%rse no4. l 4as
2o%n& eno%& l &%ess. Reall2 l 4as blessed 4#t /no4#n& so l#ttle abo%t o4
bad off l 4as. l /e8t be#n& s%r8r#sed all t ro%& t e 2ears. l 4anted to tell 2o%
t at one of t e best t #n&s t at e5er a88ened to me 4as learn#n& abo%t an
a&enc2 #n Atlanta t at for t e so%t eastern :n#ted \$tates 4as %st a to8;notc
so%rce for o%r concerts and so fort .

M: We are no4 concl%d#n& o%r #nter5#e4 on December ' (t .