

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: T. Earle Johnson

COLLECTION: 4700.0100

IDENTIFICATION: LSU graduate; professor of speech at University of Alabama

INTERVIEWER: Pamela Dean

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Alumni

INTERVIEW DATE: March 30, 1992

FOCUS DATES: 1920s - 1990s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 125

Family background; discusses siblings; ancestral history; early influence of Johnson's grandfather on his development; childhood memories; early elementary school memories; positive influence of elementary school teacher, Webb Goodlet, on Johnson; becomes a "Four-minute speaker" during President Woodrow Wilson's administration; Johnson excels in academics in high school; unpopular during high school years; enrolls in Normal college in 1921; early desire to become an attorney; active in literary society at the Normal college; has financial problems while attending the Normal college; excels academically at the Normal.

Tape 126

Recalls different rules for male and female students at the Normal college; begins working as an elementary school teacher in Naborton, Louisiana; teaches fifth and sixth grades; difficulties teaching in poor, rural schools; recalls problems with students at the elementary school; Standard Oil Company was main employer in Naborton; Mr. Oates, owner of general store in Naborton, acts as benefactor to elementary school; decides to attend LSU; Johnson's father's oil business becomes profitable; lives in Pentagon dormitory on LSU's campus; required to take ROTC during freshman and sophomore years; recalls daily ROTC drills; member of honor council at LSU; university regulations concerning women's clothing; relations between male and female students on campus; discusses aspects of military training at LSU; recalls prevalence of hazing at LSU; resented hazing tradition; freshmen have their heads shaved as part of tradition.

Tape 127

Johnson uses humor as way to avoid the traditional hazing ritual of being beaten by upperclassmen; acquires nickname of "Bull"; Johnson's freshman class follows tradition of "freshman holiday" the day after the ritual head shaving; freshman class defaces public property with the year of their graduation "1928"; freshman students commit mild acts of vandalism on Third Street; Johnson summoned to University President's office; President of LSU, Thomas Boyd,

admonishes freshman class for their behavior; Boyd informs Johnson that the freshman class had to pay for the damage they caused; freshman decide to hold a talent show, the "Bald-Headed Review," to raise the money; freshmen raise enough funds to pay for the damages; Johnson refuses to participate in hazing as an upperclassman; recalls fraternity initiation for Theta Theta fraternity; discusses social life on LSU's campus; recalls various college girlfriends; prevalence of alcohol consumption among university students during prohibition; discusses family attitudes toward Huey Long; meets Huey Long in a train compartment; Johnson was not a Long supporter; becomes instructor of speech at LSU in 1926; involved in debating teams while a student and instructor at LSU; leaves LSU in the summer of 1928; receives Master's degree from Wisconsin; joins faculty of Alabama in September, 1928; popularity of speech classes at LSU; recalls graduation from LSU in 1926.

Tape 128

Popularity of football at LSU; students make home liquor to take to games; Johnson's fraternity still explodes while members were in New Orleans; discusses tenure at University of Alabama; retires in 1969; moves to Mexico with his wife; Wife dies in January, 1982; remarries in February, 1983; moves back to Tuscaloosa in 1984.

TAPES: 4 (T125, T126, T127, T128)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 4 hours, 40 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 153 pages

ADDITIONAL MATERIAL: Proper name list; Johnson's autobiography chapters 8, 9, and 10; Article on Johnson from University of Alabama Alumni Magazine

RESTRICTIONS: None