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This interview was conducted with Dr. Don C. Walter, Associate Professor Emeritus of Music, Western Washington University. The interview was conducted on May 10th, 1979. The interviewer is Marian Ritter, Music Librarian. Dr. Walter taught in the music department at Western from 1947-1974.

MR: Today, I have with me Dr. Walter who is here to give us the history of the Music Department.

Dr. Walter, when was the Music Department authorized to give music degrees and when was the department first established?

DW: In 1947, when I arrived at the college, it was authorized to teach only elementary education and to grant degrees only in elementary education. One of the reasons that I came was to help build a fine new music building and to establish what we felt would be a very rapidly growing department. So we began working towards that end and promising students that they would soon be able to get degrees in secondary education. With that in view, we were able to build up rather fast. The students were coming home from the Korean War, the enrollment at the school was building and it grew rather rapidly from the 1,045 student enrollment when I came to double that in about two years.

The plans were being made at that time for the new building. In 1949 the legislature granted Western authority to give secondary education degrees. This was the Secondary General Certificate program. However, Western was anxious to also give the master's degree program and so the two were tied together. They did not implement both degree programs until 1951. At that time, we had developed our program in a very positive manner and the band was well organized. The choir under Dr. Regier was well organized, and the orchestra, under Dr. D'Andrea, was well organized, and we were a very active music department, giving degrees in a master of education and the general secondary certificates.

MR: Were there music courses offered when the college opened in 1899?

DW: When the College opened in 1899, there was a great deal of concern whether it would be founded at Lynden or Bellingham. One of the advantages of the college coming to Bellingham was the fact that there would be an instrumental music teacher available here in Bellingham and that there would be a person here who would volunteer to come up and direct a Glee Club for the growing college.

MR: Could you tell us a bit about where the music department was housed when it first began here at Western?

DW: I believe that it had been in the place that it was when I came here and that was the top floor of Old Main in the southeast corner. We had a large room which we used for orchestra rehearsal, band rehearsal, choir rehearsal, and any of the larger classes that wouldn't fit anyplace else. We had one more classroom and two office spaces: one which Dr. Regier used as a teaching studio; the other office was for Dr. D'Andrea and myself. The other two music teacher who were employed at this time were: Myra Booth and

Eileen McMillan. They had their offices over in the Campus School, which was a brand new building devoted to the laboratory school at the college.

MR: Could you give me a little bit of history in the department? I would like to know the names of the department chairmen and if possible the dates.

DW: I do not know that there was a chairman as such that was designated before Dr. D'Andrea came in 1946. The teachers were sort of under just a general faculty program. Dr. D'Andrea, I believe, was the first department chairman. Dr. D'Andrea, along with Dr. Regier and myself were the principal movers of building the department and building the new building. After Dr. D'Andrea left to go to Columbia University in New York, we had a series of rather temporary people. Dr. Regier, myself, and several others had a turn at the department chairmanship. My thinking is that Dr. Charles North was the next permanent chairman. He was with us for several years. The next permanent chairman was Phil Ager.

MR: The graduate degree was authorized and established in 1951 for a master's in music in education. Approximately when was the master's of music granted?

DW: The first degree was a master of education with a major in music. The master of music degree was granted about 1960. It might be a year or so away from that, but it is pretty close.

I have before me here a sort of an outline of things that have happened in the music department since 1939. At that time, and that was before World War II, the catalog listed instruction available in piano, violin, cello, voice, but it is a little bit misleading because that instruction could not be taken here at the college. If you wished to take instruction in piano at that time, you went two blocks down to Cedar Street to the home of Edith Strange. That is where she had her studio and taught piano. You could receive one credit for studying piano with Miss Strange. The same concept was also carried out for violin. You could contact Arthur Thal and go to his home where he had his studio and in that way you could study violin. For cello and all brass instruments you went to the home of Paul Lusterman. Incidentally, after Paul Lusterman's death, the musicians union set up a Lusterman scholarship which continues on for three cash prizes: \$250, \$150, and \$100 per year. Voice was available: a Miss Helgeson was the chief voice instructor at this time. I believe, under John Roy Williams, there was an orchestra. It was quite small and included several faculty members plus whatever students wished to play in it also.

The real formation of the department started when Dr. D'Andrea came in 1946. Dr. Regier came at the same time and I came in the spring of 1947. The three of us were very active there. Dr. D'Andrea was the chairman, orchestra director, and teacher of harmony. Dr. Regier was the choir director and very active teacher of voice. I was the band director and taught a great number of private lessons. We began to build the department through the use of free lesson scholarships. Money was a little bit tight in those days and that was quite an incentive. It might be interesting to note that one of my first students to come under that plan was Phil Ager. He came to the department on a trumpet scholarship and played in the band with us at that time when we were building it very rapidly. Later, you note, Phil Ager became chairman of the department a good many years later.

In 1948 and 1949 we were very busy with the building of the new building in addition to building the music department in general. I stressed the marching band aspect of it and we had a very excellent marching band. We were in demand for parades. We felt that that was one of the better ways to build up the band, which it proved to be, so we took part in a great many parades, i.e. Seattle, Portland, Wenatchee, Vancouver B.C., etc. We also took part in other specialized shows so the marching band was very well known throughout the Northwest.

We moved into the new music building from our place in Old Main. This meant we must add an organist. There were several people who came to spend a little time with the organ, but the first real organ teacher was Wilbur Sheridan. He was with us for several years but later was replaced by Dr. Schaub. During the first year in the new building, we stressed the idea of bringing in artists, particularly such organists as

Virgil Fox and Albert Schriener. There were a good many other outstanding organists who were invited to play on our new organ also. The organ was set apart as a memorial to the students who left college to join the Army and fight in the Korean War. There is a plaque that was mounted in the foyer of the new auditorium containing about twenty names of students who were killed in The Korean War. This was quite a serious matter at the time of the dedication of the new building.

We had several symphonies orchestras here, i.e. the Minneapolis Symphony, the San Francisco Symphony. Some of the fine choirs who appeared were: the Saint Olaf's Choir and the Augustana Choir just to mention some of the outstanding ones. The band made it a tradition to have some outstanding performer come and perform with the band. The most memorable experience in that way was Rafael Mendez. We played two concerts with Rafael Mendez and had an overflow audience both times. It was the second concert when we put chairs in the aisles as well as in every available place until the Fire Department said we would have to limit the adding of chairs. The following year, we asked Rafael Mendez back again. Again, there were sell-out crowds for both performances. Rafael Mendez was one of the finest trumpet players in the world and he was also a master teacher. Working with him for the few days that he was with us was an outstanding experience. Another artist who came to perform with the band was the famous Swedish saxophone player, Sigurd Rascher.

When Dr. D'Andrea left the department, he was offered a position at Columbia University. He remained there for some time and later moved from Columbia back to the University of Arizona where he is today.

I took the year 1957-1958 off from my duties at Western and joined the music faculty at the University of Hawaii. When I returned in 1958, we found it desirable to have workshops in band, choir, and orchestra. I found the Grange Hall up at Birch Bay to be an excellent [location] for such workshops. In the fall of 1958 we had the band workshop first for a week; then the choir workshop, and then an orchestra workshop. All of these were very successful. The band workshop has been continuing on now for twenty one years. The orchestra workshop was brought back to the music building and has changed its shape a great deal, as did the choir also.

There are one or two things that I believe are worthy of mention. One of the very outstanding experiences we had during the first year in the new music building was the taping of the standard school broadcasts. At that time, these broadcasts were very important in the music education of the schools throughout the United States. Carmen Dragon, the orchestra leader along with the orchestra and a variety of actors, came and spent a week in Bellingham. It was an outstanding experience for both students and faculty to watch this professional group work.

Two outstanding soloists who performed with the band were Sigurd Rascher, the Swedish saxophonist, and Leonard Smith, the eminent cornet soloist.

One other comment I might make is that I directed the band from the time it was organized in 1947 until 1957. At this time, I had an opportunity to spend a year at the University of Hawaii directing their band and organizing their instrumental music department. When I returned in 1958, the college was just getting the humanities program started. The humanities program was a very comprehensive program including various academic subjects: music, art, philosophy, history, literature, etc. After quite a long consultation with Dr. D'Andrea, it was decided that I would represent the music department in the humanities. For the next several years, I spent my time in developing the humanities program.