

# Oakland University Chronicles

*Interview with*  
**"Gerald Compton**  
and  
**Daniel H. Fullmer**

Transcript of Oral History Interview

Interview date: December 1, 1997

Interviewer: Harvey Burdick



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### **GERALD GRANT COMPTON**

Date of birth: October 30, 1942

#### **EDUCATION**

	Dondero High School Royal Oak, Michigan	1960
B.A.	Oakland University Major: Chemistry	1964
M.S.	Oakland University Chemistry	1966

#### **SINCE GRADUATING FROM OAKLAND UNIVERSITY**

9-66 • 6-67	Teacher: Chemistry Utica High School Utica, Michigan
9-67 • 6-68	Teacher: Physics, geometry, advanced math Hemet High School Hemet, California
9-68 • 1-69	Teacher: Math (seventh and eighth grades) Frost Junior High School Oak Park, Michigan

#### **CURRENT OCCUPATION**

2-69 • present	Laboratory manager, Department of Chemistry Oakland University
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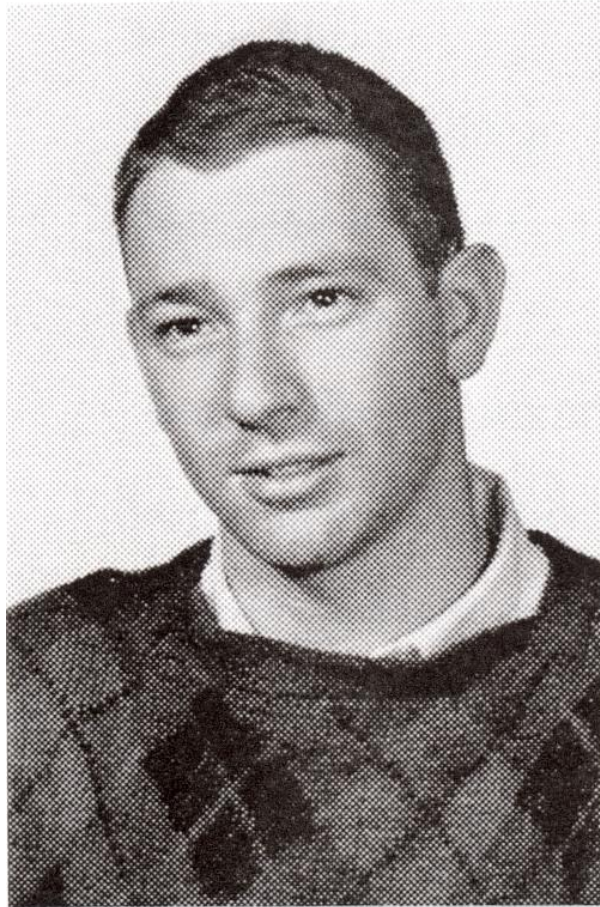
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**Photograph of Gerald Compton**

May 21, 1998 (Subsequent to interview date)

Photographer: Alice Tombouliau



**Photograph of Gerald Compton**

MSUO Yearbook 1963

## **Oakland University Chronicles**

### **DANIEL HENRY FULLMER**

Date of birth: June 18, 1936

#### **EDUCATION**

	Montgomery Blair H. S. Silver Spring, Maryland	1954
B.A.	Oakland University Major: English	1963
M.A.	University of Michigan	1964
Ph.D.	University of Michigan	1969

#### **OAKLAND UNIVERSITY**

1967	Instructor of Linguistics
1970	Assistant Professor of Linguistics
1974	Associate Professor of Linguistics with tenure

*Current as of December 1, 1997*

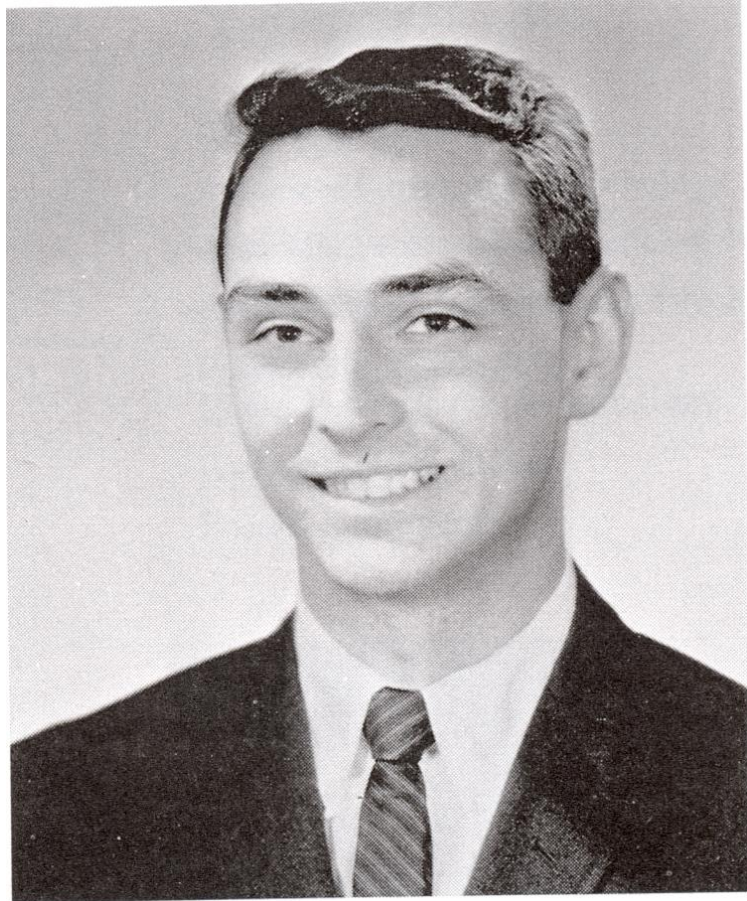


**Photograph of Daniel H. Fullmer**

May 26, 1998 (Subsequent to interview date)

Photographer: Alice Tomboulian





Daniel Henry Fullmer  
*Liberal Arts—English*  
April



## **Oakland University Chronicles**

### **Interview with GERALD COMPTON and DANIEL H. FULLMER**

**December 1, 1997**

HARVEY BURDICK: Today's interview is part of a series of interviews being conducted for the Oakland University Chronicles Project and supported in its second year by a special university allocation. The purpose of the interviews is to collect recollections of the early years of Oakland University, then called MSUO, from the various members of the MSUO community: administrators, faculty, students and others. Today is December 1, 1997 and we are in Varner Hall on the campus of Oakland University. My name is Harvey Burdick; I'm a professor of psychology and I will be doing the interviewing. Our guests are two of the early graduates. To my immediate right is Gerald Compton, and then [opposite me] Daniel Fullmer.

Gerald Compton entered MSUO in September of 1960 at the age of 17, as a member of the university's second class of freshmen. He graduated with a Bachelor of Arts degree in chemistry in 1964, and in 1965 he enrolled as a graduate student. In 1966 he received his Masters of Science degree in chemistry as well as a teaching certificate from Oakland University. Gerald Compton has been employed at Oakland University since 1969, and is now the chemistry laboratory manager and an adjunct assistant professor of chemistry.

Daniel Fullmer entered MSUO in September of 1961 at the age of 25, bringing some college credit from Rice Institute. This enabled him to graduate in 1963 as a member of the Charter Class. He entered as a student of MSUO and graduated from Oakland University. He received a Bachelor of Arts degree in English, and then pursued graduate studies at the University of Michigan. Daniel Fullmer has taught at Oakland University since 1967 and is currently an Associate Professor of English and linguistics.

We'd like to welcome you to the interview, both Dan and Jerry, and perhaps we can begin by just asking how each of you came to Oakland University, or MSUO at that time. Jerry, why not start with you?

GERALD COMPTON: Sure. I first heard about MSUO while sitting in high school at Royal Oak Dondero. I would guess that would probably be '59 or '60, and so that's where I heard about it first.

HARVEY BURDICK: You heard about it from what? From other students?

GERALD COMPTON: I think it was probably a person who came to the high school recruiting.

HARVEY BURDICK: So you heard about it, and why did you come here? You must have heard about other schools?

GERALD COMPTON: Well actually, Harvey, I came because it was my second choice.

HARVEY BURDICK: Okay, tell us about it.

GERALD COMPTON: I really wanted to go to GMI, General Motors Institute in Flint, and the reason for that was that my brother had graduated from GMI. He was eight years older than I was, and all I heard during my young years around the house was how my brother was doing and he was in college, because my parents were not college graduates. In fact, my father worked in a gravel pit and my mother was the typical housewife. So everywhere the family went I heard about my brother and how he was this college person. Of course, being a family member, I thought it was my job to have the same goal and of course the place to go was this place up in Flint.

So I applied there and a psychologist decided that perhaps the only reason I wanted to go there was because my brother was from there, and that I really didn't want to go to GMI. They gave me an aptitude test and they said I should go into farming. So, as you could tell, I was quite upset about that. So the opportunity came up to apply to Michigan State University, and stay at home and commute, which was the best thing for me to do because of the financing of my college education.

HARVEY BURDICK: You don't mean Michigan State up in East Lansing?

GERALD COMPTON: No, at Oakland, the Oakland branch.

HARVEY BURDICK: The Oakland branch at the time. So that was just a choice of convenience for you, essentially?

GERALD COMPTON: Yes. It was good in two different ways. One, financially, I didn't have to live on campus, I could commute. That was before expressways, so it was a thirty-minute drive from Royal Oak. As a matter of fact, there were five of us from Royal Oak Dondero who were enrolled here at MSUO and we carpooled. It was sort of an extension of high school for me. None of those guys came from a family where there was a college graduate either, so we were all of the same profile.

It was also probably the better choice because my folks didn't have a large enough income to pay for my education, so therefore I had to earn my own way. I spent summers working in the gravel pit running a bulldozer and road grader to afford tuition payments, and room and board, which I paid to my parents while I lived at home. That's why it became a convenient place to attend.

HARVEY BURDICK: So, what I hear is that you represent the first generation of going to college. Your parents hadn't done that before, and [you had] an older brother that you were emulating. You wanted to go to college, and then you ended up coming here because you couldn't get into the place where your brother went. So this was, as you say, a second choice?

GERALD COMPTON: Right.

HARVEY BURDICK: Was there anything special about it?

GERALD COMPTON: Not at the time. I thought that it was just another university or college.

HARVEY BURDICK: That it was convenient to go to?

GERALD COMPTON: Right.

HARVEY BURDICK: Well, let's get back to that [later] and talk some more. Dan, you perhaps have a different story. How did you get here?

DANIEL FULLMER: I was in Germany, stationed in Heidelberg in the army. I had had some college at Rice Institute, and I flunked out. So I called my draft board and asked them to take me in for a couple years. When I was in Germany I had an army buddy who was from this part of Michigan, and had heard about MSUO and was planning to attend here at MSUO, Oakland University, when he got out of the army. So that's how I heard about it.

Then shortly after that, there was an article in *Time* magazine about the university and we read about it and it sounded very interesting. So while I was stationed there I applied for admission, to see if they would take me in as a student. They accepted me. So I said, "Okay, that's great." So in 1961 when I got out of the army I moved to Michigan and established residency and started attending here.

HARVEY BURDICK: Let's see if I get this straight. We have one of you who wanted to go someplace else and ended up coming to MSUO because it was in the neighborhood, and another person who flunked out of another university, was wondering about getting in anywhere, and heard about MSUO. Do I understand, Dan, that you thought maybe this was a chance for you to go back to school?

DANIEL FULLMER: Exactly, yes.

HARVEY BURDICK: Why did you think MSUO would take you?

DANIEL FULLMER: I didn't know that they would, but they did. I guess because it was an innovative school, and maybe they were desperate to get students.

HARVEY BURDICK: Well, innovative and desperate, it may be two different things, but at least you thought maybe because it was new, that you'd explore it yourself.

DANIEL FULLMER: Exactly, right.

HARVEY BURDICK: So you came here, and I take it you established residency because you wanted not to pay out-of-state tuition?

DANIEL FULLMER: That's right.

HARVEY BURDICK: So you're here. You got here; two different routes and both ending up as commuter students. You, Dan, came here and lived in an apartment?

DANIEL FULLMER: Yes, I lived in Royal Oak as well. In an apartment.

HARVEY BURDICK: An older student and a young boy.

GERALD COMPTON: And we didn't know each other, but I remember seeing his face on campus because there were so few of us.

HARVEY BURDICK: How many people do you think we had about that time? What was the sense? Two hundred? Five hundred?

GERALD COMPTON: I came in the second year so I don't know.

DANIEL FULLMER: I think it was more like two or three hundred.

HARVEY BURDICK: It was a really small community?

GERALD COMPTON: When you saw somebody on campus, you knew they were from Oakland. I didn't know Dan then, but I knew he went there.

HARVEY BURDICK: So you're coming here, and they did some recruiting at your high school as I understand. Did they bring you up to the campus or anything like that?

GERALD COMPTON: Yes. A momentous event, I'd like to say. I clearly remember this as though it were yesterday, and of course it was in the '50s so it wasn't yesterday. I remember being in Oakland Center, and of course this was

before it was expanded and looking out to the north. We had a whole set of high school students from Royal Oak invited up there. It was probably a recruiting thing.

The luncheon was hosted by none other than Woody Varner, and at the time I didn't think that was anything special, only he just happened to be the Chancellor. But what I do remember very vividly is eating lunch and watching the sheep come over the hill as I looked to the north, which now is probably where Wilson Hall is, or the parking lot to Wilson. But there once were sheep grazing there. And I do also remember the flies that were on everything, because after all this was a farm.

HARVEY BURDICK: But then that fitted the diagnosis that you should have been a farmer. So that worked out just great.

GERALD COMPTON: That's good—to pick up on that!

HARVEY BURDICK: So your first impression of Oakland was that it was one big farm, pasture land and a few buildings. Is that what it looked like?

DANIEL FULLMER: Actually it did, and Mrs. Wilson kept ponies and horses and she had a deer herd. So you had that sense of it being a farm area at that time.

HARVEY BURDICK: You were a pretty sophisticated young man. You'd been around, been to Rice, been to the army, and were now going to a sort of farming setup. What were your impressions when you first came here, Dan?

DANIEL FULLMER: Well, the faculty wasn't exactly from a farm. The faculty was very sophisticated. Most of them, I think, were recruited from the East coast, and they were young and enthusiastic. So you had a sense of this being an intellectual setting, even though we had this farm community around us.

HARVEY BURDICK: It was isolated but nevertheless your recollections are that it was a special faculty?



DANIEL FULLMER: Yes, and it was. It was special faculty, in being enthusiastic in the areas that they were teaching, and wanting to try new things.

HARVEY BURDICK: Can you explore that for us? Do you have any specific remembrances of some faculty who tried different things, or did something that you thought was interesting?

DANIEL FULLMER: One of the newer subjects available is one I went into here, that wasn't available at most universities—linguistic courses. Bill Schwab was the faculty in the English department who was promoting linguistics on this campus, and that was one of the things that excited me. It was less than traditional.

HARVEY BURDICK: That's interesting, and that's what you went on to become.

DANIEL FULLMER: Exactly.

HARVEY BURDICK: So you came here without any specific direction as to what you were going to be, except you majored in English.

DANIEL FULLMER: No, I majored in engineering at Rice, and switched to English here.

HARVEY BURDICK: Oh, and then you picked up on linguistics, which turned you on.

DANIEL FULLMER: Right.

HARVEY BURDICK: Jerry, do you have any remembrances of faculty being anything special?

GERALD COMPTON: When I came here I didn't know what special was, because I had never been anywhere else. I just thought that this was typically what happened, and I didn't hear of this news of the innovative faculty. I just came here as sort of a high school extension with all my high school buddies. It

was like the fifth year of high school. We drove up here, but I soon came to know that it was a tough place to survive. Evidence, the four car pool fellows that didn't survive. I was the only one who did survive that.

HARVEY BURDICK: You confronted the demands of the university and buckled down. You had to study. Is that how it went?

GERALD COMPTON: Not at first, because it was not socially acceptable as a high school student to study. In fact I can remember driving up in the car and the inquisitions began. "You didn't study for that, did you?" And I would say, "Oh, no, no, didn't study." You couldn't admit studying and that was a high school mentality, and I'm sure still it is today. We would spend quite a bit of time in the Oakland Center, known as the student union, playing euchre—and every once in a while going to class. As I said my grades weren't all that red-hot back then. But after the four other carpoolers disappeared from the scene, having flunked out, I then began to decide that, not only did I not have anybody to play euchre with any more, but I decided that to survive I should probably begin to study.

HARVEY BURDICK: So in the beginning of the first year I estimate that you were really carrying on with the friends from high school, and you sort of dragged high school and its culture into the university, and then after they left you became a serious student. Did you get to know other students at MSUO at that time?

GERALD COMPTON: Not early on. We just came to campus, stuck together and left campus together as a car pool. But as they began to dismiss themselves, I came to know other people, especially in the chemistry department—but my first intention was not to become a chemist. Remember, I wanted to be like my brother, and so I was going to show those folks at GMI that I was certainly going to be an engineer, until I began to enter into the world of calculus. I had some calculus teachers that I didn't learn very much from, simply because I think their methods of teaching were to give a mid-semester exam and a final, and I was not disciplined to study and to force myself to study, like I was in high school.

HARVEY BURDICK: Oh, I see. So you were coming to college, and at least one experience was that this mathematics professor did not put homework demands every day, this and that—you had to be on your own, and you weren't really up to it at that time.

GERALD COMPTON: Exactly, that's correct. So what ended up happening is I enjoyed chemistry. I particularly enjoyed faculty members Paul Tombouliau, whom I didn't call Paul then, and Fred Obear, who were inspirations for me to go into chemistry. So that was the pull that brought me into chemistry, and the push away from engineering was calculus.

HARVEY BURDICK: Alright, and then it turned out to be very successful for you because you went on to get a masters degree in chemistry.

GERALD COMPTON: Absolutely.

HARVEY BURDICK: I don't want to press this point, but I take it you did meet other students who had common interests with you in the chemistry department or something like that, where you changed your social life?

GERALD COMPTON: Yes, in fact not only did my social life change, but because of the associations with people in the chemistry department I also began to study with them.

HARVEY BURDICK: You became serious?

GERALD COMPTON: Right. I became a serious student and more concerned about academics, as I should have to begin with.

HARVEY BURDICK: During that whole period of time you were living at home and commuting.

Of course, Dan, you had an apartment, you were an older student who probably had different experiences than Jerry. What were those early days like—the people with whom you were interacting and so on?

DANIEL FULLMER: Socially, I was working in the library to help pay my way as well, and taking NDEA [National Defense Education Act] loans. My boss at the library was a young lady who was in charge of circulation, so I dated her. My army buddy was also going to school, as I mentioned, he also got accepted into MSUO. He dated Nadji White who was Woody Varner's secretary, and so the four of us ran around together. That was some of our social context—not really with other students for a while.

Then later on I got acquainted with English majors, and we got together. We were disappointed because the official newspaper, the student newspaper, collapsed somewhere in our time as students, so we started a little newspaper called the *Outcry*. That didn't last too long, and it was kind of tame given the title that we gave it—we weren't crying very loudly. We were writing, trying to talk about the times, and then as Jerry said, playing cards. We played some pinochle with friends that were students around the university.

HARVEY BURDICK: I don't want to press that point too much, but it struck me that this is, what, '61-'62? Those are the years we're talking about because you came here in '61.

DANIEL FULLMER: Yes, '61-'62 and '62-'63.

HARVEY BURDICK: We were on the cusp of the sixties in a sense, and so this little *Outcry* newspaper had yet really to make that great leap into the free speech movement, or anything like that.

DANIEL FULLMER: That's true, we were just on the sort of edge of something like that, but some of us who were older had been influenced by the beat generation from the fifties. You know: Kerouac, and Ginsberg, and what have you. We had little special meetings to discuss some of that literature that wasn't being taught yet in the English department, as it is now. We had a reading of *Howl*, I remember, down in the grill, which was kind of interesting and daring at the time.

HARVEY BURDICK: Maybe it was—Ginsberg's *Howl*. But was it your sense that things were sort of quiet here, as far as political turmoil? You weren't

aware that the civil rights movement was happening, and people were doing all sorts of things. Oakland was fairly quiet. Is that your recollection?

GERALD COMPTON: Yes.

DANIEL FULLMER: The university was quiet.

HARVEY BURDICK: Sort of like the fifties continuing on? Interested in academic stuff but that's about it?

DANIEL FULLMER: Well, except I think politically there were international things happening. The Bay of Pigs invasion and the Cuban missile crisis occurred in those years, I believe, and both the faculty and the students were concerned about those events.

HARVEY BURDICK: That's your memory? There was some concern expressed in little pockets?

DANIEL FULLMER: Oh, yes, during the Cuban missile crisis the campus was very quiet. People were concerned that a bomb may drop on us any day. Politically too, I think President Kennedy was starting to send advisors into Vietnam, and we were very conscious of that at the time, because he had an advisor by the name of General Taylor who suggested that we should get involved in brush wars. So some of those seeds were being planted in those years, that turned into a major revolt in the sixties.

HARVEY BURDICK: Right. But Jerry, you weren't aware of this kind of stuff that Dan is talking about?

GERALD COMPTON: No. When you're seventeen and eighteen years old, you're more interested in how your high school football team was doing on Friday night. And I can't remember even worrying about that. I guess I was sort of self-centered.

HARVEY BURDICK: Now that you mentioned it, let me pick up on this point. You come to Oakland University and there's no basketball team, no football team. Did you have to turn back to your high school to pick up on all these things that a seventeen- and eighteen-year-old is interested in?

GERALD COMPTON: I think there was probably a lack of social activity on campus because of that. I mean there was no reason to gather socially.

HARVEY BURDICK: Were you disappointed? Was it one of your complaints?

GERALD COMPTON: No, I don't remember being disappointed, because I ended up going back to high school. Going to the dances.

HARVEY BURDICK: So what you're saying is, that there was nothing going on here?

GERALD COMPTON: Right. Well, I remember playing flag football over next to what is now the library. It wasn't there when we played football. I also remember playing hockey. There was a hockey match between the faculty and the students. I guess I interacted with the faculty in more ways than one. In fact, I have a picture somewhere at home of me shooting at the goal and the picture was in the school newspaper.

HARVEY BURDICK: So the faculty were young enough to get on the hockey ice? There must have been other things—baseball, maybe picnics?

GERALD COMPTON: I don't remember that.

HARVEY BURDICK: Did you ever have any other interactions with faculty? No gatherings, you weren't invited over for parties, intimate little gatherings, nothing like that?

GERALD COMPTON: I do remember, this goes back probably early on, when Matilda Wilson had a tea. That was very impressive because she was the owner of this gigantic mansion, and why she would ever want seventeen- and



eighteen-year-old kids to come with their parents over to her place was very impressive. That was the freshman tea and when we walked into this unbelievable place, there sat Mr. and Mrs. Wilson and greeted each of us as though we were long-lost buddies.

HARVEY BURDICK: So that was impressive, the fact that you were recognized as something special. You weren't just ignored.

GERALD COMPTON: Yes.

HARVEY BURDICK: Maybe you would have been [ignored] up in MSU in Lansing; here you were special.

GERALD COMPTON: Now that was a special event, it really was, yes.

HARVEY BURDICK: But as far as socialization—it was primarily with old friends from high school, and there was not that much for you going on, on campus.

GERALD COMPTON: Not during the first year or two before my buddies left me, no. Then it became a departmental thing. I hung around with the chemistry majors. We bummed around together and did academic things, and I was finally on the right path.

HARVEY BURDICK: You were serious—I mean now you got channeled into your future. But what I'm getting is that not that much was happening outside of the classroom at Oakland University, for you.

GERALD COMPTON: Not that I was involved in.

HARVEY BURDICK: How about you, Dan? I mean you had these people you knew, but were there any social activities that were happening at the university?

DANIEL FULLMER: I don't think so, really. But you asked about intimate gatherings with faculty. We did have an academic issue come up in the English

department, and the issue was over the nature of courtly love in poetry from the Middle Ages. So Bob Hoopes had a little gathering at his house with Gertrude White and some of the English major students, to have a discussion of the issue in the poetry, and the meaning of the poetry. So this was an intimate contact with the faculty members and it was a social affair as well. But that was kind of rare. That didn't happen every month. That was a special occasion.

HARVEY BURDICK: So even though the faculty were young and exciting, and there was lots of work in the classroom, there wasn't that much outside the classroom, at least from your perspective?

DANIEL FULLMER: No, and if there were with other students, I must have ignored it.

HARVEY BURDICK: I'd like to go back, because we have two different perspectives, one from someone who had been to a major university and could make comparisons, and someone for whom of course it was the first time at a university, and it's all very new and special for you, and it's hard for you to say how this compares. So let me turn to you first, Dan, and talk about some differences you experienced here in contrast to Rice Institute. Could you talk about the kinds of teachers you had, the closeness of the faculty?

DANIEL FULLMER: I think the classes here for the most part were smaller than they were at Rice, and a more direct, one-to-one relationship between the student and the professor. If there were large lectures here, then there were also recitation sections that the faculty members—and not graduate assistants— participated in. So that made a major difference, I think, in preparation for the material, and in the terms of motivation and interest in what was being taught. Of course, after I left here and saw other universities as well, you'd get the graduate assistant experience elsewhere that didn't happen too much here.

HARVEY BURDICK: That was very special, because the faculty were well-educated and they were conducting these small discussion sessions.

DANIEL FULLMER: Exactly, you could pick their brains. And my experience in the past had been that there was a barrier between the students and the professors, that didn't exist here.

HARVEY BURDICK: The professors were at a distance, gave the large lectures, and you would never go up to their offices and talk to them, because they seemed like distant figures.

DANIEL FULLMER: Hardly ever.

HARVEY BURDICK: But you, Jerry, you thought this was normal. This was the way you thought universities normally are conducted.

GERALD COMPTON: Yes, absolutely.

HARVEY BURDICK: You know, Jerry, Oakland University has claimed that it tried to do something a little different in the design of this curriculum and—not that you were aware of that—but at least the university thought it was being special. Part of that had to do with the general education requirements. You came, you got excited about chemistry and that's what you were going to invest yourself in, but you were required to spread out weren't you, whether you liked it or not?

GERALD COMPTON: Yes, and I didn't like it.

HARVEY BURDICK: In the beginning you didn't like it. Why?

GERALD COMPTON: No, I didn't like it at all. I thought, "Indian studies—I mean, why could you ever want that?" That was one of the more exciting courses. I really got to like India. Also art history, I didn't think that that would be any fun at all, and I still remember to this day some of the slides I'd have to memorize. Also the music appreciation class, I enjoyed that as well.

One of my more exciting courses outside of chemistry was taught by Professor (V. John) Barnard. It was an American history course, and I always liked history from high school. It was sort of my second love but I couldn't

minor in history. Anyway, I went to this class thinking I would be there writing the whole time, all these dates, and instead I put the pen down and just listened to the story. I was just in awe of the story that was told and unfolded, and I just remembered it all because of the way that it was presented.

HARVEY BURDICK: Okay, here's a difficult question. Would you say, now that you're essentially a member of the faculty and teaching chemistry, did those general education courses sort of round you out, and make you into perhaps who you are today?

GERALD COMPTON: Absolutely. I think it's essential to have those courses.

HARVEY BURDICK: Interesting.

GERALD COMPTON: You know, it reminds me of my mother telling me I should eat my vegetables, and I'd say, "Oh no, not those." These courses were the vegetables; and the dessert, the good part of the meal, was the chemistry and the math and the physics. The vegetables were all those other courses, but I came to like the vegetables and they were good for me.

HARVEY BURDICK: That's interesting. So Dan, how about you? Again, I know you had faculty running a small classroom, so that was special compared to large universities like Rice or U of M [University of Michigan]. But how about the general education requirement, because we were a little different than you'd find elsewhere?

DANIEL FULLMER: Actually I was very excited about that, and I found [the courses] very interesting. I was glad to get some breadth of experience that I hadn't had at Rice. I had, as [Jerry] said, art history with Professor Stillman and he was very stimulating; and music—it wasn't really music appreciation, more the cultural history of music with Professor Holmes, and a lot of in-class listening to music and analyzing music, and that was exciting. I had introduction to China from Shelly Appleton, and I also had India from Professor Potter who left, and Western institutions from George Matthews. All of that was

very important in terms of giving me a good solid foundation to understand our culture.

HARVEY BURDICK: Even though you were in humanities, you were pushed out of your Western culture into the non-Western culture, and that was, I think, special for Oakland.

DANIEL FULLMER: Yes, I think that's important.

HARVEY BURDICK: So in a sense it was a liberalizing education for you. Of course you were in the so-called humanities, and therefore liberal arts—right, the core? Nevertheless, it also was liberalizing for you as well.

DANIEL FULLMER: Exactly, yes it was.

HARVEY BURDICK: Would it be fair, then, to say that Oakland University was distinctive in that sense? You came not knowing any different, but perhaps in retrospect—and I don't want to put words in your mouth—but was it?

GERALD COMPTON: Absolutely. As long as we're name dropping faculty, I did forget one, and that would be you, Professor Burdick. I need to tell you a story.

This is when I was in your class in 1962. I remember where I was sitting, even, in the lecture hall when you began what turned out to be a demonstration. There was a knock at the door of the lecture hall; strangely enough, you answered the door. There was this voice out there, yelling and screaming at you, and you countered with yells and screams, and the class inside sat petrified and completely silent. You came back to the classroom and you said, "Now the point of this was blah, blah..." and I of course don't remember the point. But I'll never forget that incident, and you did a good job of demonstrating something that I can't remember.

HARVEY BURDICK: Can we discuss it now?

GERALD COMPTON: I just wanted to tell you that the innovative [aspect], you were part of that, so thank you.

HARVEY BURDICK: Was there that feeling at least in your remembering, Dan, also on the basis that you can make that comparison—they were young, were they innovative? Do you think they tried to do something different at all?

DANIEL FULLMER: I wasn't aware of their trying to be innovative. It was just more of trying to interest the students in some way or another; or they betrayed their own interest in their disciplines, let's put it that way. I could see that in the faculty. They were interested in teaching.

HARVEY BURDICK: So maybe it wasn't the faculty that was innovative themselves, but it was the curriculum which they were teaching that was innovative.

DANIEL FULLMER: That's part of it, essentially.

HARVEY BURDICK: You know, Jerry, I can't help but notice a photograph in front of me which you are in, and I think I'd like to get this on the record. (I don't know whether the camera can see that.) Here are four students and Woody Varner, and these are the first four graduates with masters degrees at Oakland University. There you are right over there, and you should be very proud of that.

GERALD COMPTON: Yes, and that was in the *Pontiac Press*.

HARVEY BURDICK: The *Pontiac Press*, 1966.

GERALD COMPTON: Right. It's now the *Oakland Press*, and all of those people are much older now.

HARVEY BURDICK: Yes, but not you.

GERALD COMPTON: No. But there were four graduates to first graduate with masters degrees, two from chemistry, two from mathematics.



HARVEY BURDICK: They probably went on to become high school teachers, I suppose.

GERALD COMPTON: Yes, I did that, became a high school teacher.

HARVEY BURDICK: And you, Dan, went on and got a Ph.D. after having flunked out of Rice Institute. You know, in a sense, Oakland University saved your soul, your academic soul.

DANIEL FULLMER: Yes, it did indeed.

HARVEY BURDICK: I don't think we could ignore that.

DANIEL FULLMER: Right, I don't think I'd be a professor today if it weren't for Oakland University's undergraduate work.

HARVEY BURDICK: And now you've come back and have made a very special career at Oakland University.

DANIEL FULLMER: Yes.

HARVEY BURDICK: Well, if you have any last thoughts we're now reaching the end of the interview.

GERALD COMPTON: I'd simply like to say that Oakland University has been my life. I started here when I was seventeen. I was here between the years 1960 and 1966. I left to go try teaching high school and ended up being stuck in junior high teaching math. Fortunately, I ended up in the barber chair out here at Oakland at the right time, when [professor of chemistry] Joel Russell followed me in that chair. He heard me complain to the barber that I was very dissatisfied with my current position, with these thirteen-year-olds eating me up in terms of discipline. I came back here in 1969, and have been here ever since. So between the years of 1960 and the present 1997, I've only been away two and half years, so has Oakland University meant something to me? Well, I guess so!—I think you could conclude that.

HARVEY BURDICK: Thank you Jerry. And Dan, do you have any last words?

DANIEL FULLMER: I think currently Oakland University still has a fairly rigorous general education program. It's more than just distribution requirements, and the rationales for the various areas where students have to take courses are well-thought-out. More so, I think, than at most universities, and I think the seeds for that were sown in the very first years of the university.

HARVEY BURDICK: So you can still feel those early days?

DANIEL FULLMER: I think Oakland University still has some of that specialness to it.

HARVEY BURDICK: Okay. Well, thank you.

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