

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Jimmie H. Hoover

COLLECTION: 4700.1246

IDENTIFICATION: Arkansas Tech and Louisiana State University alumnus, former librarian at LSU, University of New Orleans and East Baton Rouge Parish libraries, author, Air Force and Korean War veteran.

INTERVIEWER: Mary Hebert

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Alumni

INTERVIEW DATES: December 1, 1999

FOCUS DATES: 1940s - 1960s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 1824, Side A

Jimmie Hartman Hoover born in Board Camp, Arkansas; father worked in forest service; Jimmie born into Great Depression in 1930; mother worked many jobs; grew up on farm; Jimmie and his sister picked crops as children because men were away at war; his budding patriotism during the war; attended two-room school house in; father taught him to correctly lower and fold the flag; mother ran off and married at age fifteen, divorced at twenty, returned to high school, where she played baseball on men's team until demoted to cheerleader; Jimmie was never athletic; followed girl to College of the Ozarks in Clarksville, Arkansas; helped pay for college by working in sawmill; terrified of losing hands in sawmill; wanted to be an artist; bad financial turn for family necessitated transfer to cheaper Arkansas Tech; sawed lumber to afford first semester; worked as yearbook editor, a job that came with an airplane at his disposal; college job in library hooked him on library work; draft deferred until day of graduation; joined air force so he wouldn't be drafted into artillery; air force sent him to Russian language school; court martialled because he went for surgery on injured foot without telling language instructor; displaced Russians as language school instructors; kicked out of Russian school, transferred to crypto school; job overseeing welfare of people from the language school; filled temporarily vacant administrative jobs in air force; background investigation to check Jimmie's fitness for intelligence work; administering security clearance oaths; levels of clearance; security investigations he was involved in; went to Libya instead of Korea; conditions in Libya: bad food and disease; assigned to 34th Radio Squadron Mobile, which monitored communications in desert; communications equipment used; job duties working in personnel in Libya; Libya still mostly run by Italian former colonists when Jimmie was there; Libyans are a prudish people; clubs and booze in Libya; Lucky Luciano's casino in Tripoli; reopening of service club after it was shut down due to a murder; hired Lucky Luciano's floor show for the reopening of service club; ran out of beer at reopening, inciting a huge brawl; Arab police with night sticks called in to quell fight; enormous

fly problem; against law to kill flies because there were no bees to pollinate the date trees; Roman ruins in Libya; description of Tripoli; short tempers during Ramadan fast; called into service as Haile Selassie's honor guard when Selassie's plane made emergency stop in Libya; enjoyed time in air force, but not much money in it; never needing an overcoat was a factor in choosing LSU for graduate school; his parents had moved to Kansas; struggle to fit into library school after military; got graduate assistantship; graduate assistant time added to retirement benefits; library school was happiest time of his life; worked in circulation in Hill Memorial Library; work under Kenneth Toombs, also a veteran and one tough boss; copy of *Lady Chatterley's Lover* disappeared on his watch, but came back years later.

Tape 1824, Side B

Training at library; project assigning numbers to books so several small libraries could be integrated into Middleton Library; Jerry Leggio, his student employee who moonlighted escorting beauty queens; difficult transition from Dewey decimal to Library of Congress system; finding uncataloged books when they moved to Middleton; planned to look for job in Arizona after graduation, but accepted job with LSU; offered better paying job at LSUNO; getting General Middleton's assistance in transferring to LSUNO without losing benefits; difficulty in getting promotions: "People were waiting for people to die to get senior librarian"; returned to LSU after four years at LSUNO; pressure from supervisor to attend American Legion meetings; won door prize at meeting, which paid his membership dues; wound up as commander of American Legion post; American Legion work got his foot in doors of all the important people on campus, most of who were ex-officers; loved how his command of post reversed the hierarchy, so that he could call generals to attention; political situation surrounding Jimmie's return from UNO to LSU; new job in binding department was a demotion; after seven years in binding, transferred to run circulation department; next job was in order department; really wanted to work in document department; next assigned to assist Edith Simms; became head of documents in 1967: "I was in heaven for seventeen years"; Senator Overton Brooks and his sister, who worked for Jimmie; personnel dramas in library, people angling for archivist position; Jimmie's employees and graduate assistants; Middleton Library built with separate white and black drinking fountains on every floor; in late '60s, head of LSU chemistry department refused to take black or foreign students; Jimmie's department was the most integrated in the library, got the most work done; complicated paperwork situation for students enrolling at LSU in the late '50s; students had trouble fulfilling paperwork requirement, especially priests, nuns and Jimmie; UNO bought MGM library of movie books; UNO was rough student population, people who couldn't afford other colleges or couldn't get in; faculty also a mixed bag; the Parkchester apartments, where Jimmie lived in New Orleans; his yard man was shot in the hand; integration conflicts at UNO.

Tape 1825, Side A

Memories of historian Stephen Ambrose refereeing touch football games at LSU; Alaskan earthquake of 1964 sloshed water out of pools in Louisiana; LSU pool closed, controversy over whether this was due to repairs or to avoid integration; petition went around to reopen pool; Jimmie signed petition, later had his name removed, ashamed of removal; Nick Kalivoda researched history of land grant colleges and determined that ROTC wasn't really compulsory; LSU declared end of compulsory ROTC in 1968.

TAPES: 2 (T1824, T1825)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour, 32 minutes

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 53 pages

OTHER MATERIALS: Consent form (3 pages), correspondence, article from LSU SLIS program newsletter.

RESTRICTIONS: None