

Interview with  
CARROLL EDWARDS

Conducted by  
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Oral History Project  
K.U. Retirees' Club  
University of Kansas

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A. C. EDWARDS

A. B., Southwestern, 1933

A. M., Iowa, 1938

Ph.D., Iowa, 1949

Service at Kansas

Associate Professor, 1947-1949

Professor, 1959-1981

Professor Emeritus, 1981

Q: This is May 15, 1991, and I am Calder Pickett, and this is going to be an interview with Carroll Edwards, who retired a number of years ago after a long career here in the English department at the University of Kansas. I have not known Carroll well myself in a personal way, but I always feel that I have because his wife and my wife have been playing bridge together in the same group for I think it must be more than 30 years now; I'm pretty sure it goes back into the 1950s, which means that I have always known about the Edwards family and some of the things they've been doing and so on. Carroll, I'm going to start you at the beginning, in a way the same way that David Copperfield begins, and ask you to talk a little bit about your childhood, your date of birth, and where you were born, who your parents were--a little bit about them, and a little bit about your family, if you had any brothers and sisters and so on, and then we will move up into recent times.

A. You want me to start out with my birth time. I was born in Davenport, Oklahoma, 1909, a long time ago, on a farm. There were seven of us in the family and I had a sister who got tuberculosis, and in that day tuberculosis was ordinarily fatal. So my mother had heard that if you moved out West, the climate would help. So we moved out West to Colorado--homestead, in Eastern Colorado. My father, who knew nothing whatever about land in the West, homesteaded on 160 acres. I had two sisters who were mature, and they also filed claim to 160 acres. But in Colorado on that land, you need about 20,000 acres to make a

living, so we didn't stay there very long. We had some interesting experiences. We were there at the very end of frontier days. There were still a great many wild animals. There were a lot of deer, and the nearest store was eight miles, and it was just a station on the river.

Q. What town were you near?

A. Trinidad, Colorado.

Q. Down there in the southeast?

A. That's right. Trinidad, Colorado, which was 70 miles away. And so my father hired a boxcar at Davenport, Oklahoma and rode with all the stock out to Thatcher, Colorado, and then we drove the cattle over eight miles to the homestead. We built an adobe house. This was the standard material for edifices in those days. We built an adobe house, but showing his lack of knowledge for the way you build an adobe house, he built a two-story adobe house. Nobody ever built a two-story adobe house. We had a dirt floor for the kitchen, and that wasn't quite as bad as it might seem to you, because that dirt gets hard as concrete and you sweep it out with a broom just like you would with concrete. Well, we stayed there, and I have some [good] memories of the seven months that we were out there. We lived in a tent at first, and there were rattlesnakes to avoid when we had to go out and drive the cattle in at night. There were rattlesnakes galore, and one of our neighbor homesteaders had a cigar box full of rattles he had taken from rattlers. We stayed there until the fall but there was no school at all, the nearest school was at

Trinidad, so my mother decided that we would move into Trinidad so that we could go to school. We had a covered wagon--it must have been one of the last of the covered wagons--and drove it the 70 miles to get us to Trinidad with all the stock. After we moved into Trinidad, I went to school there through the eighth grade--a public school. You can't play hooky when I went to the ninth grade in Trinidad, and my mother, who had an Ulster Protestant's notion of Catholicism (among other things) assumed that Catholics were strict, and she sent me to the Catholic school there. I enrolled in the Catholic school, and had a very fine experience with the Catholics.

Q. Did you have good teachers?

A. Real fine. There were dedicated nuns, really dedicated, and their whole life was their students and their religion, and that was it. They wore the seventeenth-century costumes of the Sisters of Charity--the black gowns that go down to the ground. I went there for four years, played basketball, and then decided to go on to college. I wrote around and finally decided to go to Southwestern College in southern Kansas, so we drove down in a Model T.

Q. What town was that?

A. That's Winfield, Kansas.

Q. Down there by Wichita?

A. Yes, south of Wichita, north of Kansas City. I had four years at Southwestern, and a couple years after I graduated from Southwestern I wanted to read more poetry, so I wrote to Iowa and

asked about attending graduate school there and was accepted. I went four years to Iowa, got a Ph.D. in English, and that's the extent of my education.

Q. Carroll, you said you got interested in poetry. Do you have any feeling or idea about what it was that got you started in being interested in literature? Did you have many books in your home?

A. That was it. We were very poor when I was a kid, but my mother was absolutely obsessed with the notion of education. No matter how little money we had, she always had money for books of poetry and Comron's Picture Encyclopedia for us to read, and encouraged us to read. We had a lot of books of poetry around the house, and she liked it too. In those days there was a lot more memorization than there is these days, and my mother had memorized a lot of poetry such as Byron's poem on Waterloo: "It is, it is the cannon's opening roar"--and my mother would recite it.

Q. "St. Agnes Eve"--"how bitter chill it was." That's the one I remember I memorized at one time. "Vision of Sir Launfal."

A. Yes, that's one we always read. I continued that interest and finally got a Ph.D. in it, and then got a job at Oklahoma State University in Stillwater.

Q. About when was this?

A. This was about 1940, when I went to Stillwater.

Q. Did the Depression years hit you in any significant way?

A. Yes--well, they hit everybody. That's the strangest thing. You can't communicate that spirit of Depression to people who've never experienced it. The thing is, you could see no end to it. Now you read this pabulum in the newspaper: "This recession is bound to be short-lived." Well, this one went on year after year and you could see no end to it, and it looked as if life was going to be like that. You were on the razor's edge between having enough food to eat, not just deprived of some luxuries. You had to struggle. You had to struggle in order to get enough money to pay the rent. There simply was no work. You just could not get hold of any money. On the other hand, it had some good aspects to it. I think it kind of solidifies the family because you spend more time at home, and in those days the girls were always taught to play the piano, so you could stand around the piano and sing songs. We weren't the consumers then like people are now, the consumer ideal that you see that has apparently taken possession of the whole world. Everybody in the world wants to be middle-class. I think that we were above that in the Depression, and we had more solid tastes.

Q. Of course it wouldn't have been this way in the big city, but in the smaller towns we had vegetable gardens, raising many of the things we ate, and kids got out and got jobs, and this was something that you had to do. I think everybody I knew had a job. 1940--my gosh, that was a long time ago. Your Ph.D. in 1940? And you went from there to Oklahoma State. When does Virgie enter the story for you?

A. Virgie enters the story when I went to the University of Iowa. We were both enrolled in Old English, met each other, and that's what started the whole thing.

Q. Where was she from?

A. She was from Illinois, near Peoria. But we both liked poetry and we both liked literature, so this was a sort of bond between us.

Q. Were there any teachers you had there that stand out in your memory?

A. Yes, I think it would be a pretty poor student that didn't have teachers that stood out in his memory. I think we all remember our--well, I don't like to say favorite teacher, but we like to remember teachers that had some influence on us. We had two of them. One was Henig Larson, a Norwegian who had come over and who taught Old English. He was a demanding sort of guy, great big, and absolutely formal in his Old English class. Then there was E. N. S. Thompson, who was a Milton specialist, and there were others that you remember. I had a good experience at Iowa, very pleasant, and I learned something.

Q. How did you find your way into Old English? Isn't that a rather esoteric [field]?

A. Well, it didn't used to be. It would be now, but at that time, if you were going to get your M.A. and your Ph.D., you had to take either Greek, Old English, or Latin, so Virgie and I decided we would take [Old English]. We had to have a reading knowledge of it.



Q. That is another language.

A. A tough foreign language.

Q. When I was looking at your stuff here, I guess I should have known, but I didn't know Chaucer was your specialty. Chaucer was about the only English class I didn't take when I was in college. It just seemed it would be too tough. I didn't have an English major, but I would have had I taken Chaucer.

A. There used to be figures in English that it was de rigueur for you to take. If you were going to major in English, you had to take those figures. They were standard. They were required, you had to take these figures, but that's loosening now, and you have a lot more emphasis on diversity.

Q. I [heard] that there's some basic things that people should take, and I think in English that there are some things that everybody should have.

A. The thing of it is, what bears down upon the present student body is the fact that the Prince of Wales and the Repulse went down in the Second World War, went down to Davy Jones' locker. That is why students do not take the standard figures any more. Before the Prince of Wales and the Repulse Britannia ruled the waves, and she certified that minor figures of the seventeenth century were excellent and should be studied--put their stamp on it, you know. But art follows the flag, and when England went down, then so did English departments as we used to know them. Now, they might say "A modern novel is as good as Jane Austen," or something like that--"We need diversity"--but

you didn't need diversity when Britannia ruled the waves. You tried to follow what you thought was the lead. So I'm rather glad that I got out of the profession when I did because it would be awfully hard for me to adjust myself to the present study of English.

Q. Have you seen these columns I've written for the Journal-World lately about that very subject? I know it's an old-fashioned attitude, but I find a lot of people I've been talking with think what I say is right.

A. You and I know that there's been a decline, but the young don't know that there's been a decline; the young always assume that their age is the greatest of ages. They don't worry about it the way you and I would worry about it. We know that Shakespeare is greater than any other living English literature figure; we just know it. But they don't know it. It has something to do with authority, in a way. The young don't want any kind of authority, whether it's Shakespeare or whether it's the state, or whatever it is. They simply do not want authority. There's not much we can do. We can get some comfort in the knowledge of the fact that no declining nation ever realized it was declining. Corinth, which was one of the most decadent cities that ever existed back in Paul's time, didn't know it was corrupt. It didn't know it was declining. It just assumed that everything was as it should be, and I think that's the way with our own time. Most of the evidence that I can see shows evidence

of a decline. But those who are younger than I, who are immersed in it, they don't see any decline at all.

Q. Did you ever mix this kind of stuff up at an English faculty meeting when course requirements were being dealt with and new courses proposed and so on?

A. Yes. When I first came here, I supervised English 1, 2, 3, and 4. You had to have 12 hours of English then. In those four semesters, I put in the established reading list for those courses, and that included the Bible, Plato, the Greek plays, Shakespeare, and Milton. We even thought that the novel was too trivial to be put into a University course, so we didn't include the novel in any of the reading lists. But that didn't last. It didn't last because they said the students didn't like it as much as they should. They thought it might be easier if we had more popular works, so we began to teach what we called genre literature. One semester they have poetry, and the next semester they have the novel, and the next semester plays, and so on, but the caliber of the reading list declined drastically from then. There isn't much you can do about an old system when it's in a decline. There really isn't very much you can do about it.

Q. How many years did you spend at Oklahoma State?

A. Three years, I guess. One year before the war and two years after the war.

Q. I saw here that you went into the Air Corps in 1942?  
You were in for three years?

A. Virgie and I had gone to a movie. When we got out of the movie we heard that Japan had attacked Pearl Harbor and we both knew that life as we knew it was gone. We both recognized it instinctively. Maybe a few months later the Air Corps was looking for instructors who would teach bombing and ground school, and they wanted experienced teachers. They commissioned us directly from civilian life as second lieutenants, and we had to go down to Miami Beach and spend six weeks, actually most of the time doing close-order drill. For a person who's in the Air Corps, close-order drill is one of the strangest things that possibly could exist, I suppose. Anyway, we had close-order drill under a boiling sun at Miami where we worked about eight hours a day. There was no air conditioning then, and we would go back to our hotel, and the German subs off the East Coast had been active, so there was a blackout, so you couldn't even open your window (it was blacked out with a curtain over it). You'd go down there and no air conditioning in those hotels--it's a wonder we didn't die. After six weeks, then we were sent to mostly various places in Texas where most of the Air Corps camps were. I was sent to San Angelo, and Virgie joined me there, and for three years I taught bombing and navigation at San Angelo on the Air Force base there. 23:30

Q. What background did you have for teaching that?

A. I didn't have any. It didn't make any difference to the Army. That isn't the way the Army runs things. One of my colleagues in this thing was a guy from Peoria who was a

professional photographer, and so the Air Corps approached him and said, "We need professional photographers," so they commissioned him too. He was down there with us, and he was doing the same thing we were doing. Graduate student in English and this professional photographer--both of us were teaching bombing.

Q. That's interesting. Did you spend the war years here in this country?

A. Yes. It sounds real comfy, to say that we spent three and a half years in San Angelo, Texas, in the Army, but it wasn't quite that pleasant because we never knew from one week to the next whether we'd be sent over to bomb Berlin, so you could never rest easy, wondering if you would be sent out next. Yes, we stayed in San Angelo for three and a half years.

Q. I'm going to have to backtrack here briefly, because there's something I want to ask you about. It goes back before that. You were engaged in social work?

A. That was during the Depression in the middle '30s. I was engaged in social work. I had no training as a social worker, but it was in charge of the state at that time, and it included to some extent the WPA--you know, the Works Progress Administration--and also it was the people with whom you dealt--all kinds of people. Some were down on their luck; some were invalids; and some would be on welfare no matter how prosperous the country was. Yes, I was in that for three years. I never did like it very much, but it was experience. I had some rough

and tough experience. Actually, to face the problem squarely, capitalism had really hired me to see that we didn't put out too much money to these people on welfare. This is what the job really was. I suspected that; it was in the back of my mind all the time. As for professional social work, only the supervisor was trained in that. You know, adjusting families, family problems, and this sort of thing. We were concerned with employment, with grocery orders, with money for the people and so on.

Q. What city were you in?

A. Both in Winfield and Arkansas City.

Q. Small towns. These were governmental jobs?

A. They were governmental jobs. Really state; the government put it in the hands of the state, so it was really Kansas. I've forgotten--KERC, I think. Kansas Emergency Relief--this is what it was called. I took the job because I couldn't find anything else. It was after I spent three years in social work that I determined that I would go on and take some more work in English, and that's why I went to the University of Iowa.

Q. The background of that--working in the cities, getting out in the slums and so on--this was the kind of background that Theodore Dreiser had for the books that he wrote. I'm not sure he was ever a great writer, but he was a powerful one.

A. Yes. They're more or less out of favor now because we don't like to think or consider the Depression; it's just

something that is not done. There's a whole school, you see; the novels of Steinbeck, those are concerned with the Depression.

Q. Who's the Missouri man--Jack Conroy, who just came back into fashion in a way. I hadn't even heard of him until I read that book The Disinherited about twenty years ago. When the war was over, you went to Illinois for a year?

A. Yes. I went to Illinois. I met this Henig Larson, who taught Old English, and he went as Chair to the Department of English at Illinois. I [was] then discharged from the Army in the middle of the year, so Larson said they needed some instructors in English and asked if I'd like to do it. I said, well, I got the job at Oklahoma State, but I won't be going there till next fall, so I taught a semester at the University of Illinois. So I taught at Iowa, Illinois, Kansas, Oklahoma State, and the Air Corps.

Q. Then you came here in 1948.

A. '47, I think. I think I came here in '47.

Q. How did you happen to come here?

A. The reason I had to come here is, the head of the department at Oklahoma State was invited to become chairman at Kansas. So after I had stayed another year there at Oklahoma State, he invited me to come up and supervise the 1, 2, 3, 4 English, so that's the reason I came to Kansas.

Q. Who was the head of the department?

A. Clubb, Merrel Clubb. You remember him.

Q. Oh yeah. How long was he head of the department?

A. I imagine maybe seven or eight years.

Q. And who was it following him?

A. Let's see--Jim Wortham.

Q. I'm trying to keep track of all the people. You came here three or four years before I did, but I suppose I knew most of the people who would have been teaching here then. Who were some of the other people on the faculty at that time?

A. Well, some have gone now. Merrel, Bill Paden, John Hankins.

Q. People like Hal Orel and George Worth didn't come until--

A. They're newcomers as far as I'm concerned.

Q. Yeah, they came after I did. That must have been quite a time. Did you and Virgie get stuck in Sunnyside?

A. Yes. That was funny. What the university had done was to buy up some of these barracks and move them down to what is now called Sunnyside Parking or something--they moved all those barracks down there. Each barrack consisted of four apartments, two downstairs and two upstairs, and they gave us one of these upstairs apartments. As I say, there was no air conditioning in those days. No insulation. That used to be almost the sole topic of conversation when you met somebody in the morning: you'd talk about what a horrible night you'd had.

Q. No cabinets.

A. No.



Q. That was a very good social atmosphere, though, because we were all the same. I remember one summer I was working on the Topeka Daily Capital and I would take off and they would be out there under the tree by the sandpile with all of the other wives and all the little kids playing there in the sand, and that's how we got to know the Meserves, and a good many other people that were there at that time. These were our friends.

A. I remember I was working just part time in an abstractor's office, and the lady in charge of the office came laughing to work one morning and said that what they all did, was you had to sleep out on the back lawn or you couldn't sleep at all. So here were all these people sleeping next to each other all down the block in their back yards. She said that shortly after they had gotten into bed, this lady's voice just came out loud and clear, "Oh, not tonight. It's too hot."

Q. It would have been too hot for anybody out there. You know what I remember from down there was the cockroaches.

A. Oh, really?

Q. When we moved to Tennessee Street, we took cockroaches with us, and we had to spray. We finally got rid of them. I also remember the family who had lived in the same building--now this may have been a myth--but they were from the Orient and rice had dropped down in the cracks, and they had been so unclean that roaches were actually coming up. I'm not sure I believe that, but that's what we were told. What life was like there in Sunnyside! When did you folks move out to the country?

A. I think in '48.

Q. Well, you moved out there not long after you'd been in Sunnyside.

A. Yeah, we went from Sunnyside.

Q. How'd you happen to go out there?

A. We didn't have a car to keep up, and we saved enough money during the war, and we didn't like Sunnyside, so we thought we'd buy a house. Buying a house then was simpler than buying a house now. An agent took us out to see this big old two-story stone house, at that time two miles from town; now the town's right across the road from us. He took us out to see this house, and he supposed naturally that I had a family, and he says, "We wouldn't try to sell this house to just a couple. It's so big, it's for a family." He says, "A couple would rattle around here like peas in a pod." He didn't know we were just a couple. But we liked the place, so we bought it for \$10,000. We've enjoyed it ever since. Right across the road from us was the country, and we used to watch the coyotes running after the deer at a 160 south of us. We saw the wild turkeys out there. We have a pond; we built a pond, so we have geese and ducks on the pond. We had the illusion that we were living in the country. We couldn't sustain that illusion now, because the town's everywhere.

Q. I understand your place was kind of a refuge for dogs and cats?

A. Oh, yes. We lived just far enough out of town so it's convenient for people to take their animals or pets out and drop

them off in front of our house, so we never bought a pet, and we've had pets all our lives. We've had as many as twelve cats, and I guess three dogs at a time is the most we've had of dogs. Yes, we've had pets all the time.

Q. Did you have some kind of outbuilding or shed or barn or something?

A. No, they were all house animals. They all came into the house. We had some steps that lead inside into the kitchen. It's a flight of steps, and we had this one dog that dropped off, a great big long-haired white dog, and it was apparent that he had never experienced steps in his life because he could hardly get up them. He'd take one step at a time and take the next one; he had never been into a house before, and he had never been trained. This big white dog had never experienced the inside of a house and didn't know how to behave. At a meal one time, Virgie had cut off a piece of her steak and took the fork in her hand and started it toward her mouth, and this white dog leaped through the air and grabbed the steak off her fork. Seemed all right to him; he hadn't been taught any manners. We've always had a pet. We had a horse for years--20 years we had a horse out there.

Q. Did you like to ride?

A. Yes, I liked to ride. We didn't give him enough exercise really, but girls at K.U. were glad we had the horse and so would come out and ride him, give him exercise.

Q. I'm interested in some of the courses that you taught. You got your own list here that you made yourself years ago. Did you teach Chaucer in most of the years?

A. Not most of the years, but maybe a third of the years.

Q. What kind of enrollment did you have in that, Carroll?

A. Usually about twelve students. They were small classes.

Q. Was it required?

A. I don't think it was required. I don't think so. It could be that in your requirement you would have something like "three major literary figures," and you could take Chaucer as one of your three major literary figures. Some requirement like that--I don't think ever a direct requirement, that you had to take Chaucer.

Q. Shakespeare must have been required, though.

A. Shakespeare was required by the School of Education; they required it, but if you're an English major, I think you just naturally take Shakespeare. I'm not sure it was required. If you had that one of three required, most of them would take Shakespeare.

Q. And then you taught the Modern Drama. The word "modern" always interested me. I remember I took Recent American History when I was in college, and it began after the Civil War and "Recent American History" a number of years ago would have been after World War II. Of modern--modern begins--

A. Modern begins wherever whoever says where it begins, so we said Modern Drama begins with Ibsen, and in some ways it's justified, because Ibsen was the originator of the problem play.

Q. As I remember, Ibsen would have been the first also in a class that I took. I guess a great part because of the adventurous subject matter that he attempted, the kind of thing that hadn't been tried before. People writing about such daring things--A Doll's House. What's the one about--Ghosts. That was a shocker when that one came around.

A. They were supposed to present problems, you see. Ghosts you would say, "Should you honor your father and your mother?" Should you honor Captain [Elvin], who gave Oscar syphilis, so Oscar was born with syphilis? So those were all social problems, and caused a good deal of controversy.

Q. A little heavier in mood--I've often wondered if that happens to you when you live in Scandinavia.

A. They usually make this division between what they call the well-made play and Ibsen's social problem plays. Well-made plays were popular in France, where you just had a formula which you followed. You just had a formula and you just followed this formula at the end. You aren't really concerned about social problems, or for that matter about anything important. You just had a formula like the surprise figure from the past--see, he's supposed to enter into it--and all these others. They thought they were theatrical things, so you just put them all in your play. It came out as the well-made play.

Q. Which of the playwrights did you like?

A. I like Shaw best of the bunch; I like Ibsen very much, but I like Shaw the best. Shaw is a real startling figure, you know. He refused to be down. He was maybe romantic in his notion that the world and man are perfectible. I don't think anybody believes that any more, but Shaw did, and the reason Shaw wrote his plays is because he wanted to help perfect mankind. He wasn't interested in the dough and he wasn't interested in the fame. He was a teacher and he wanted to do his bit to see that people became better. He thought they became better as they listened to his plays, so that's the way he wrote his plays.

Q. He also entertained us in the process, which doesn't apply to all of them.

A. No, that's true. You know there's that ancient--well, Horace says profit and pleasure, and that's been true of all the great artists in the past. They just took this for granted, that a work of art should be profit and pleasure.

Q. Were there any of those people of the great modern playwrights that you didn't really care for much?

A. Yes, but none that I've absolutely disliked because they probably wouldn't have been accepted as great modern dramatists in that case, but some of them you just don't care very much about, but chiefly the obscure ones. The modern notion is that if you're obscure it must mean that you're real intelligent. Instead of striving for lucidity like the Greeks did, the modern poet or the modern dramatist thinks that he has the right to be

obscure, and I didn't like those. There are certainly modern dramatists that I don't have any regard for, but you don't find those in anthologies ordinarily.

Q. Did you include any American other than O'Neill or did you include O'Neill?

A. It included O'Neill. Now this was just after World War II and the reason you include O'Neill is because we developed the atomic bomb. Art follows the flag, and when we developed the atomic bomb, then that meant that other nations would listen to what our artists had to say, and O'Neill was one of those figures. His earlier plays hadn't been very successful, but then with the coming of the atom bomb, O'Neill became an important playwright. I think we have others--certainly Williams and Miller are important American playwrights--but that's just about all that we've had.

Auden was talking about something else, but that can be applied to this. He was saying that the late nineteenth century and the early twentieth century was a period in grand opera which was probably as great as fifth century Greece was in its drama. One could almost say this about modern drama. For this brief period, you get all these important playwrights and no one can account for it. How can you account for Shakespeare? Someone thinks the only way you can account for Shakespeare is if a layer of ozone settled near the earth, people were invigorated, and suddenly outdid themselves, and it's impossible to explain those great modern dramatists.

Q. Carroll, did people like Elmer Rice and Robert Sherwood and Philip Barry have any real importance, or was that mainly popular drama?

A. You'd probably have to say that [there was] no real and lasting importance. They certainly grabbed your attention and they tried to talk about serious things, but for some reason or other they just didn't attain first rank in those. Of course, that's in the eyes of the beholder. Thornton Wilder is an important figure in Germany; they think he's pretty good. We no longer think he's pretty good, but they think he's pretty good.

Q. Of course, a play like Our Town is so much a part of the whole American culture in a way; I guess that's why he would be there. When did you become associated with the Modern Drama magazine?

A. It must have been in the late '50s.

Q. Was it started here?

A. Yes, it started here. I had been teaching modern drama, and suddenly became aware that there was just no journal on modern drama, and so I went to the College. You had to be sure when you started something like that or you would lose everything you had. I went to the library and got out all the catalogs, and found that next to Shakespeare, modern drama was the course that English departments most frequently offered, which was a surprise. This meant that you would likely get some library subscriptions, which you have to have. We then put an ad in the Tulane Drama Review that we intended to bring out a scholarly



journal on modern drama and we would welcome contributions. So I waited until I had a year and a half's supply of those contributions before we decided to publish--that's the way you started it. Oddly enough, that was another problem. Are there enough scholars writing on modern drama so that you can sustain a journal? I still didn't know, you just had to wait, so I waited a year and a half and got a very good supply of pretty good articles, and then we started publishing the journal. I published it the first 16 years of its existence.

Q. Was it quarterly?

A. Quarterly. We got an old hard-bitten Confederate over in Columbia, Missouri, a printer. And we got Walt. I had already talked to him about it. So we were thinking, how could we economize. We thought, how about the proofreading? Do we pay for that? He [the printer] said yes, you have to pay for the proofreading, for the time spent on it. We said, how about it if we pay you for the errors that we make and not pay you for the errors that you make? Well, [he said] okay, okay, okay. Meriweather was his name.

Q. What was the year--you told me before we actually started taping--your time with Modern Drama came to an end--when was it?

A. Let me see here just a minute.

Q. About 1973. Tell me, how much work was it?

A. It was an awful amount of work, because we did everything. You just don't realize. No one really starts up a

magazine the way we did, just Virgie and I, and we had to do all the mailing, all the addressing. You were supposed to keep 250 back copies of each issue. You'd be surprised later at the libraries who wanted them. We used to lug those 40-pound cartons of books up to the attic above the garage, up some rickety steps, and Virgie just wore herself out making those address lists. There are a lot of things with the computer now and so on that it wouldn't be the worry now it was then, but it was an awful lot of work. I didn't get any time off for several years for putting it out. At the last, I was relieved of one teaching course a year.

Q. Tell me something. Was that something that was credited in your record in terms of research, or was it service? How did the university regard the publication?

A. The administration, the promotions committee and that, they probably regarded it as publication. You see, now, what I was doing was editing, and they regard [as] publication anyone that puts out an edited book or an edited collection of poems or something like that.

Q. Did you write much for it yourself?

A. No, I wrote some reviews and a little piece or two for it, but I didn't write much for it myself. In fact, we didn't accept local contributions.

Q. Walt was working with you on that. I remember he did a lot of research at that time on Howells. Howells was not really what I would call a major figure as a playwright.

A. No, he wasn't, he wasn't, but yes, Walt brought out the standard edition; New York University published it, the standard edition of Howell's plays. He was good help to have on the magazine. One thing about Walt was that he could see through pretention like nobody else I ever knew. He knew whether it was pretention or not, and so we'd get contributions, and sometimes from real well-known people, but that didn't matter to Walt. It was whether the article was good or not. One thing I always admired him for, which I didn't think I'd have courage enough to do, he accepted an article from a black teacher at a junior college in Oklahoma, and ordinarily you'd think that a black teacher at a junior college in Oklahoma couldn't write for Modern Drama, but it was a good article and Walt accepted it. It didn't matter who you were; it's whether your article was good or not.

Q. Carroll, who were some of your colleagues that you have special memories of or special affection for? People who you worked with in your years in the English department?

A. Well, I remember all the girls and some of the young men we hired to work for Modern Drama. I probably remember those because I was sitting out here, isolated in an office putting out Modern Drama, and I really didn't have very much to do with my colleagues at that time, and it was mostly these young people that I was with. John Hankins I remember--we still hear from John Hankins. He lives on a farm in Maine. He must be 90 now. He sent us a photograph of himself shoveling snow so they could get out to the garage, so he's pretty active. Then Merrel Clubb,

who was an old standby, with me at Oklahoma State and with me here, and I have fond memories of him. Then there's the young people in the department, a lot of them. Gerhard Zuther came here while I was at K.U., a good deal younger than I, and I remember him well. In Germany he belonged to the Nazi youth party, and he came over here when he was 19. He was a genius at language. He spoke English with not a trace of a German accent to it, and not only that, he knew words which most Americans wouldn't recognize, English words. I used to try to catch him, and I remember one time, I said, "Can you tell me what a cowcatcher is?" And he says, "That's that grid that they put on the front of an engine." He knew that.

Q. Lots of Americans wouldn't know that. There's something I wanted to ask you about, and maybe you don't want to talk about it. I was always very fond of Frank Nelick, and I remember years ago that Frank and Dennis Quinn and also John Senior became involved in a whole lot of controversy because of the Pearson program. In fact, Frank has been interviewed in this same thing, but he can't release the transcript yet because these fellows have run a lawsuit against someone because of what was written about the Pearson program.

A. Yes, I know it. They won it.

Q. Is it over?

A. Yes, it's over. They won it.

Q. Well, then I'm going to call Frank, because he told me he'd let me know. They gave my name to their lawyer because I

wrote a few articles kind of in defense of their program. I could see why it was controversial; I can see why it angered a lot of people, but our daughter Kathy was in it, and found it a quite positive experience. I always got along very well with Frank.

A. You know that Pearson--that was George Waggoner's idea. Waggoner was the dean of the College, and he was going to set up what he thought would be an improvement in the university structure, especially in the College of Liberal Arts, so you'd have various colleges in the College of Liberal Arts. I don't think he thought it through, and immediately he ran into opposition from the chairmen. They didn't want to lose power, you see; the chairmen didn't want to lose power, and so they opposed it. Well, anyway, Pearson College was one of those colleges which was set up--there were four or five of them--and Pearson College was one of them, and Dennis Quinn was the director of Pearson College, and I agree with you; I think it had a lot more virtue to it than some thought. I used to have some of their students in classes; they'd recommend my Shakespeare class or Chaucer class or something like that to those Pearson students, and by golly, they were ideal students. They were just ideal students. I think it was a great loss when they defeated that college plan; I think it should have been a step in the right direction.

Q. Well, Dennis has a personality that angers people. He can be a hard guy to get along with. I never knew John Senior.

Frank, I always thought, was one of the most amiable guys I ever knew, but Dennis and I bumped heads a good many times.

A. Yes, he's pretty set in his ways.

Q. I haven't talked to him in a long time, of course; I've talked with other people in your faculty. I'm very close to Hal Orel, and I know George Worth quite well, and Joel Gold. I think these are some solid, solid people.

A. I think most of those people you mentioned were good teachers, and Frank was an excellent teacher. Dennis was a good teacher. Joel Gold is a real good teacher. They were good teachers. I'll tell you what about Frank, I don't know if you'll include it in this interview, but I'll tell you about Frank and his teaching. You never knew what was going to come up. Frank was teaching his poetry class. He was teaching "With rue my heart laden"--it's a poem, and it just goes,

With rue, my heart is laden  
For many a friend I had  
For many a rose-lipped maiden  
And many a lightfoot lad.  
By brooks too broad for leaping  
The lightfoot lads are laid  
The rose-lipped girls lie sleeping  
In fields where lilies fade.

Well, Frank was taking up this poem in his class, and he thought he'd find out whether or not they knew what was going on in the poem, and so he says, "What do you think is going on here anyway

in this poem?" And some boy stands up, and he says, "Well, I think it's a poem about a guy who is sorry about laying the girls." "By brooks too broad for leaping / The lightfoot lads are laid." That "laid" gets stuck in the student's mind, and he says, "It's by a guy who's sorry about laying the girls." And Frank, with not a change in his features at all, said, "No, no, it's about a bunch of queers," he says. "See? 'By brooks too broad for leaping / The lightfoot lads are laid.'" He never went back on it during the day. He just let his whole class walk out into the world assuming that Houseman's poem was about a bunch of queers. That was something.

Q. Who are some of the students you had that stand out in your memory? You mentioned the ones that worked on Modern Drama.

A. There were a lot of them. Eleanor Hadley was one of [them]. She was a real good student. She went from here and went to Yale.

Q. She took Western Civ from me. Her dad was Hugh Hadley, from the Kansas City paper. Didn't she marry Barbara Waggoner's son?

A. No, she didn't. She married a guy she met at Yale. He was from New York. His father was superintendent of the schools there.

Q. I remember Eleanor.

A. Yes, I remember Eleanor. I still keep in touch with her. Her family lives in Kansas City, and when they come through, she comes back to visit her family and then usually

comes over and visits us too. And there was Barbara Avery, who was the daughter of the former governor. She was a very bright student. I think you usually remember those that were bright. It's too bad you don't remember the others. They aren't necessarily the best people at all, but I think you remember those who were bright. There was Gretchen Engler, who married and went over to Europe; her husband was an Episcopalian priest. She went over to Europe and stayed there. She's still over there. And some of the young fellows, I remember those.

Q. Something I was wondering about, I wanted to ask you. Here under "Scholarship" and so on, is that an article that you wrote?

A. Yes, that's an article I sent to TLS. That's just after the war had started. "Knaresborough Castle and the King's [?]," that's a Chaucer article. Knaresborough Castle is a castle in England, and when Thomas a Beckett was murdered, the knights who murdered him fled to Knaresborough Castle, and the place took on a real bad name. So one day I was reading and I noticed parallels to Chaucer's "Lawyer's Tale." It deals with the wicked stepmother theme. In the "Lawyer's Tale," it said that the knights stopped at what he calls "the king's mother's court." And then I happened to read one just after Chaucer, one which was written before, a Dominican monk had written, the same tale. Both of these guys, on each side of Chaucer, says "We stopped at Knaresborough." Well, the king's mother was the wicked stepmother, and she owned Knaresborough in Chaucer's tale, when



in actually John of Gaunt owned it. John of Gaunt was Chaucer's patron, so Chaucer couldn't afford to have his patron's property identified as Knaresborough; it would have been quite a slam to John of Gaunt. But some of those things, the detective stuff, you know, they're fun to run down, that's all.

Q. What about committees? Did you get stuck on a lot of them in your university days?

A. No. I was on the College Administrative Committee one time.

Q. Promotions Committee?

A. I can't remember.

Q. You didn't ever do that?

A. No, I don't think so, no. Is there still a College Administrative Committee?

Q. I think so. I don't know.

A. It probably doesn't do anything.

Q. I don't know. A lot of that stuff, I'm not sure they do any more. The Promotions Committee does all that, because I was on the University Promotions Committee twice. We worked our butts off in a few weeks. It was really a job.

A. I avoided the public eye because I was putting out this magazine, and I was stuck way over here in Sudlow. Is it Sudlow? Yes, Sudlow.

Q. That's where you worked. Did Virgie work there too?

A. No, Virgie worked at home. We set her up an office at home and she worked at home. I worked over there, with a student

helper or two and Walt. You see, Walt was with me. So I was out of the public eye and they didn't think of me when they were setting up these committees, which was all to my good. I didn't do very much committee work at all.

Q. Do you feel that your university progress or whatever was ever held back because you weren't on a lot of committees?

A. No, because, we didn't put much emphasis on that when I first came here. That was only later when they started this importance of committees. All that matters is publication anyway. They may say that teaching matters, or that committees matter, but they don't. It's publication.

Q. Oh, yeah, for sure. No matter how hard they try to stress teaching. What year did you retire?

A. Eleven years--it must have been 1980.

Q. You retired when you were 70?

A. Actually I was 71. I got to teach an additional year because of this rule that school had started before you're 70, you see, and my birthday's in August, and school had really started just before my birthday, so I taught that year.

Q. Did you and Virgie ever get much traveling done?

A. Yes, we did in a way. We've been going back and forth to Illinois for years now, and we go maybe five or six times a year back and forth to Illinois. Virgie inherited two old houses back there and we've been going back and forth fixing them up and so on, and just to get away. We went to Europe and for four months we just bummed around in a Volkswagen, over in Europe. We

didn't have any reservations at all in those days. We would just go as far as we wanted to go, and stop and find a room in France or Italy or Spain, and we had a good time. Four and a half months we were on the road over there.

Q. How about in England, in the land of your--

A. Yes, that was part of it too. That's where we last put up, was in London. We [wandered] up through Ireland and over through Scotland, and we didn't travel around England as much as we should have done.

Q. Did you visit the homes of the literary people?

A. Yes.

Q. Chaucer--where was Chaucer from?

A. We were over there in England and I said, "I'd like to meet Sean O'Casey." So we went down to Torquay--that's where he lives--and he was almost 80.

Q. He lived in England?

A. He lived in England. He lived in Torquay, which is way down south in England. So I went up to the door and I had a magazine, and I told the maid, "Would you show this to Sean O'Casey and ask him if it would be all right if we saw him for a few minutes." And she comes back and she says, "Yes, he's there." So I go in and Sean was alone. So we had a real good talk, and I saw him once more after that. I visited him once more after that.

Q. What was he like?

A. Well, he's Irish. That's probably the first thing, he was Irish. He was thin, real thin, and kind of bony, and wears real heavy glasses because of his sight. Smoked a pipe. He had on this placard up above his fireplace, he had this placard up here that said "Get the hell on with the play." I think O'Casey liked to talk, and he liked to visit, he liked to write letters. I got several letters from Sean O'Casey. He's a very compassionate guy, no streak of cruelty in him in at all.

Q. Who's the Irishman who wrote The Playboy of the Western World?

A. Synge. I put out a special issue of the journal, and it was devoted to Synge and O'Casey, and I don't think O'Casey was too pleased at being coupled with Synge, because he never thought Synge was very important. O'Casey's a communist and a social writer, and all his plays deal with social subjects in one way or another, and he thought that Synge dodged the issue; his plays aren't socially important.

Q. What's the Dublin Theater [group called]--the Abbey Players? He was part of that?

A. Yes.

Q. The Plough and the Stars?

A. The Plough and the Stars is O'Casey. Synge was part of it and writing plays for them, and also in simply managing the theater, he and Lady Gregory and Yeats.

Q. Synge was good, wasn't he? In spite of what O'Casey thought?

A. Oh, yes. Synge is still put on the stage, he's still theater. He has the dramatic instinct. He had the Irish in him. Someone asked Shaw one time, years after Shaw became world famous, they said, "Do you ever think about yourself? What was it that you had, anyway, that you should become a world-famous figure?" Shaw said, "I don't know. I don't know what it is. Maybe I have the Irish gift of gab." O'Casey had the Irish gift of gab, and so did Synge. The playboy, you know, has the gift of gab. He seduces that barmaid just because of his language, his talk. "Boy," she says, "you got a fine bit o' talk, stranger." They love that gab, the Irish do.

Q. I don't remember the name of the author, but he wrote a book about the Irish-Americans in which he suggested that so many Irish become prominent in politics because of their feeling for language, their love for oratory and sounding off.

A. Probably true.

Q. What have you been doing in your retirement years?

A. It's safe to say I've done almost nothing. I have a hobby of grinding stones and polishing them and making jewelry out of them, and so I spend some time on that. Of course, we have those ten acres to keep you busy that we have out next to the house. Taking care of the overgrowths, you know--

Q. Do you grow any crops? Vegetables?

A. Yes, we always had a big garden, until this year. Got a garden, but it isn't big like we usually have.

Q. Probably getting a little tired of that. I know I am.

A. You can't justify it any more. Did you ever go down to the Farmer's Market?

Q. Always.

A. There you are. Why should you have a garden when you have the farmer's market?

Q. We always try to have tomatoes and peppers. That's about all. Years ago I even had a little bit of corn. Onions are worth some work. It's really fun to do that stuff. Do you still read a lot?

A. Yes, I read a lot. That's what I do mostly if I'm not working around the house or the yard.

Q. [Do you watch any] movies?

A. We don't watch much T.V., but we watch the mysteries when they come on in the evenings, almost every day of the week there's a detective [show].

Q. That's the kind of stuff I like too. I'm kind of interested in what they're going to do with Willa Cather's O Pioneers! this week.

A. Is that coming out?

Q. It's on Friday night on public television, and I believe it's a type of musical. Nola said you and Virgie rather liked Franco Zeffirelli's version of Hamlet.

A. Yes, I thought it was quite satisfactory. Did you see it?

Q. No, I haven't.

A. This is a long tradition of Hamlet. They make Hamlet a moody, melancholy Dane who can't act and he didn't play that way, and I think there's justification for not playing him that way. They've over-emphasized the melancholy of Hamlet and the fact that he's poetic instead of active, but this is a more active Hamlet, this last one. Pretty good.

Q. In fact, they always say, "The melancholy Dane."

A. That's the way they've regarded it.

Q. Carroll, do you have any observations to make about your University of Kansas experience? There's something I've always wondered about, and that was that period in the late '60s and the counterculture, that kind of thing. Did that have any effect on you?

A. It's strange--it didn't. I never had any trouble in my classes with those students, so in a way it passed me over. Well, in fact, I think probably I joined in with the students a little. I remember they were all going over on Malott lawn and standing in protest of something or other--I've forgotten what--so I went over and stood with them, with a placard. I'm sure I was put on the FBI list, but I didn't have any trouble with the students. There was a great deal of pressure then to modernize things, bringing literature up to date. It didn't faze me, I didn't pay any attention to that.

Q. Make things relevant.

A. Make things relevant--that was the word. Relevant. I didn't pay any attention to it and I never had any trouble with

the students. They knew I meant business, and I wasn't a sorehead. I didn't think of myself as different from the students, so I didn't have any trouble with the students in that period. In general I was in sympathy with the students.

Q. This is a leading question. Maybe I hadn't better phrase it that way, but what's your overall feeling about your university experience here, and your days in Lawrence?

A. Well, I say essentially that I regretted that--I don't know how many years ago it is, a good many years ago now, maybe, twenty years ago--the University decided to emphasize graduate work instead of undergraduate, and I've regretted that because Kansas was beginning to get a real fine reputation as an undergraduate school, and you can sustain an excellence in undergraduate work cheaply when compared with what it takes to maintain excellency in the graduate work. We cannot compete at graduate work, and we cannot and never will compete with Cal Tech and MIT and Harvard and the University of Chicago, and we will always be a second-rate graduate school when we could have been a first-rate undergraduate school. The emphasis now is on the graduate work, rather than on the undergraduate, and I've regretted that. I think everybody would probably have led a little bit happier lives if they had continued the emphasis on the undergraduate work, just tried to become first-rate (which they were) undergraduate school. So that's one thing I've regretted. On the whole, I don't have complaints about K.U.; I'm



not nuts about the place, but I don't have any real complaints about it.

Q. You were here a long time, so you must have liked it well enough. I know in my case there was a time when I definitely wanted to get away but after a few more years went by I came to like it more and more, and I guess now I think this was a pretty good place to have lived.

A. I think so, and that's what I've come to the conclusion of. We had many advantages; we're just an hour from Kansas City and the climate may be abominable, but we do have long nice falls.

Q. Fairly nice springs; summers are miserable.

A. I think the faculty relations in general have improved since I came here. When I came here, the Chancellor ruled with an iron hand. You could hire and fire a teacher if you wanted to. No one else had to agree with him. But that's gone, and I think the administration at K.U. has improved as far as the relationship of the faculty is concerned.

Q. Carroll, are there any other things you'd like to add? We both have touched on a good many things in our conversation.

A. No, I don't have any now. I don't have anything I think is important enough to bring up.

Q. What I'll do is, as soon as I can have it transcribed . . . I'm going to see if I can get the English Department to do it. I've been asked by several departments, because we have a terrible time getting these things transcribed--finding

secretaries. Of course, we also have a terrible time finding enough money. That's one reason we're calling on so many departments. I thought I would ask. After I get it transcribed, I'll get it back to you and you can look it over and see whether it's okay. I thank you very much for talking to me.

A. Thank you, Calder.

:kh

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DEPARTMENT OF ENGLISH, THE UNIVERSITY OF KANSAS

STANDARD FORM: CURRICULUM VITAE

Edwards	A.C.	8-25-09	9-30-74
Name	First name	Date of birth	Date furnished or updated

I. EDUCATION (Degrees, with specialization, dates)

A.B.	1933	English
M.A.	1939	Chaucer
Ph.D.	1941	Chaucer

Title of Dissertation: Chaucer and Italian Humanism

Dissertation Chairman: E.P.Kuhl

II. ACADEMIC APPOINTMENTS (Department, Institution, Changes of Rank with Dates)

Grad Asst.	Iowa	1938-1940
Instr.	Okla. State	1940-1942
Instr.	Army Air Corps	1942-1945
Instr.	U. of Illinois	1945-1946
Assc. Prof.	Okla State	1946-1947
Assc. Prof.	U. of Kansas	1948-1957
Prof.	U. of Kansas	1957----

III. OTHER RELEVANT EXPERIENCE (Other Professional Work, Experience in Administration, Significant Sojourns at Other Institutions and/or Abroad Including Sabbaticals, Significant Skills Other than Professional Specialties)

Social Work	1933-1937	
Acting Chairman, Dept. of English, U. of Kansas		1955
Instructor	Army Air Corps	1942-1945

## STANDARD FORM: CURRICULUM VITAE

Edwards

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Name

IV. HONORS (Undergraduate, Graduate, Teaching Awards; Signal Recognition of Research, e.g., Book Prizes, Inclusion in Anthologies, etc.; Post-Doctoral Fellowships, Grants from Outside Organizations for Research and Advanced Studies)

Chaucer article included in Oxford. U. Press anthology of Chaucer articles.

V. COURSES TAUGHT (signify by asterisk those for which your records contain or you can furnish evaluations, either peer or student; list separately any new courses you successfully proposed and taught)

Comp. and Lit. courses

Hist. Engl. Lit.

Poetry

Chaucer

Shakespeare

Modern Drama

Mod. British Drama

Shaw Seminar

Special Studies in Modern Drama

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Name

## VIII. SCHOLARSHIP

List under separate headings as follows:

- a) Already Appeared (Separate into Books, Articles, Reviews, Other)
- b) Accepted for Publication (Publisher, Journal, Date, Length)
- c) In Progress
- d) Papers Presented (Date, Occasion, Title)
- e) University General Research Grants Received (Dates, Project Titles)
- f) Significant Research Specifically Entered into to Inaugurate or Substantially Improve Courses Taught by You.

## Appeared:

Fulke Greville on Tragedy, London Times Literary Sup.  
Knaresborough Castle and the Kynges Modres Court,  
Philological Quarterly; three reviews in M.D.  
Fifteen volumes of Modern Drama

Papers: Renaissance Advice Letter, SCMLA, 1940  
Intro. to Man of Law's Tale SCMLA, 1946

University General Research Grants 1958-1971 Modern Drama

Research to Improve Teaching Founded and published Modern Drama

I <sup>did</sup> ~~do~~ significant research on all the courses I ~~have~~ taught.

## STANDARD FORM: CURRICULUM VITAE

Edwards

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Name

## IX. PROFESSIONAL ORGANIZATIONS (Dates, Tenure of Offices, Sessions Chaired, Discussant Participation)

1959-1969 I either chaired or appointed the chairman of all of the MLA sessions on modern drama.

## X. SERVICE (Indicate Dates, Chairmanships, Advising Duties Undertaken)

## a) Departmental

Acting Chairman 1955  
Chairman Administrative Committee 1954

Supervisor Comp. and Lit. 1947-1953

b) College Two terms on College Administrative Committee

## c) University

None

## d) Community, State, Nation

Church committees

Friends of Library Committee