
Oral History Project

Historical Information

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James R. Phipps

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Interview with James Phipps

Spring 2019

- Jim Phipps: Well, we started out. I was the chair because I was the department. I graduated from Cedarville in the spring of '68. And in the fall of '68, I started teaching, which was a challenge by itself because it meant I was teaching classes with people I sat in classes with in the spring. And that was a bit of a stretch. I look back now and realize that I probably needed to be a little bit more seasoned.
- Jim Phipps: But anyway, came 1970, there were two of us in the department and Dr. Reed, who was the chair and a wonderful man and my mentor, decided (he got an offer from Dallas theological seminary) to go down there and teach. And that was where his heart was. He was great at teaching pastoral studies and preaching and those kinds of things. And so when he pulled out, I was alone. We had one other fellow that taught drama and he left by mid year. So I was automatically the chair. The great challenge about it was and the fun part was I got to build the department after that. For probably 30 of those years, I hired literally everybody that came in the department, maybe even 34 of them. And while that was a challenge, that was also very rewarding, cause we had wonderful people. We had a dynamite group.
- Jim Phipps: We went, though, from being the youngest faculty on campus to most of them now retired, including me, although I'm teaching right now anyway. I've taught fundamentals, history, public address, persuasive theory, interpersonal theory, broadcasting, history of broadcasting, broadcast media, introduction to broadcasting, introduction to journalism, journalism history, fundamentals of speech, organizational leadership, capstone courses, research courses, and I'm leaving something out. Oh, storytelling, which I'm teaching right now. And communication ethics. So if you want a longer list, you'd probably have to go look it up. There might be one or two other things in there.
- Jim Phipps: Oh my. I have never had a course I didn't like, so that kind of tells you the other side of it. I love history, so presenting history courses was just a real pleasure. History of Public Address is probably the one course that I always felt like I had some ownership on and really loved doing, but right now I'm teaching Storytelling, and talk about fun. Got a great bunch of students in there this term. I've had as many as 25 in a class and that's a bit much, but listening to them start from being a little hesitant to end being just pretty good at it just really makes it rewarding.
- Jim Phipps: I'd have to say there were several of them, and almost all of them relate to students who went through and sometime near the end of their time I said, you better get your graduate degree, cause I'm going to bring you back. I did. And being able to watch them grow and develop, become great teachers themselves, that's probably the best thing. Maybe the greatest reward is watching somebody who, maybe for years, has been told they can't do it, learn to be good, especially in communication. Somebody that grew up being told, "oh, you're just a C student" or, "you're just a D student". The greatest reward's when they walk across the stage. And they've made it.

Jim Phipps: Well, the first thing I'd say is don't ever listen to what everybody told you. And then the second thing I'd say is work hard, and when you run into problems, come see me, and together we're going to make this happen. And one of the ones I remember the best is now selling medical supplies and teaching brain surgeons how to use them. He'd been told most of his life he'd never amount to anything, but he has. Never gets to me. Yeah. I got quite a few memories like that of students who are... They used to call me the Statue of Liberty prof, you know. Give me the tired, the poor, the hungry. Yeah. Huddled masses and we'll see what we can do with them. And I don't think I have ever had to regret bringing somebody along. I just don't remember that.