INTERVIEW WITH FRED HENRY
BY R. FRANKLIN THOMPSON

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T: Your father was here at the College of Puget Sound from 1921 on?

Henry: Yes. I believe he died in 1945.

T: He was professor of chemistry and Dr. Todd asked him to be Dean, is that right?

Henry: Yes. He was Dean, I believe, between Lemon and Register--somewhere in there.

T: Do you know how he happened to be asked to be Dean?

Henry: No, I don't.

T: When I talk to the alumni, they all have the highest regard and affection for your father. He must've been a person who was student-minded.

Henry: Yes.

T: Of course, they didn't have too many students in those days and they could take a personal interest in them, and he must've been very much student-minded. Do you remember him discussing things at home about curriculum, etc.?

Henry: I know that he knew chemistry inside and out and he studied more every night than I did. I mean he was really up on it and he was a real brain, really.

T: Where was your father born?

Henry: Iowa to a farm family and I think it was a large family, maybe seven or eight brothers and sisters and he was the only one who ever went to college, and when he was in the eighth grade the teacher encouraged him to take the state teacher's exam which he passed.
T: He evidently was very bright.

Henry: Yes, he really was.

T: What was his college?


T: How did he happen to line up with the missionary society?

Henry: That I don't know. My mother came from Ligonier, Indiana, and she was teaching school in Lewiston, Idaho. That was where he met her. Shortly thereafter, they went to India.

T: Do you have any idea how long he served as a missionary in India?

Henry: About eight years.

T: You said that your mother died there? Were you old enough to remember any of it?

Henry: I was about five when they came back. I started the first grade over here. She died of complications with appendicitis operation--gas pressure on the heart, which wouldn't have happened had she been over here with a good doctor.

T: Those are tragic things, particularly as so many of the missionaries suffered in the missionary field, because of lack of knowledge. Your father came, taught chemistry and then he was Dean. Regester followed him, didn't he?

Henry: I believe so. While he was Dean he was also chemistry professor. It was a little too much of a load.

T: Yes, it would be. We've always been strong in chemistry and the curriculum was very strong in chemistry and science. Did he help to decide on Fehlandt, do you know?
Henry: I don't know.

T: He must have retired before 1945 because he wasn't here when I came in 1942.

Henry: That may be right. Maybe he died in 1945. He was 75, I think, when he died.

T: Was he a big man, physically?

Henry: No, no he wasn't. I'd say about 175 pounds.

T: What were his hobbies?

Henry: He was a voracious reader. He had about 5000 books when he died, of which he gave most of them to UPS. Gardening, flowers, tropical fish. But he didn't go in for hobbies. When he retired, it was a bad time because UPS had just had a retirement system for about two years and there was no social security, and his retirement was $500 a year.

T: They put that system in in 1936.

Henry: He bought a farm in Puyallup, raspberry farm, so he was working at that until he died--pretty hard work.

T: You said you were a student here from 1926-29.

Henry: Altogether, I had two years and two summer schools after that.

T: You changes from English to chemistry, is that right?

Henry: Yes. I majored in English.

T: You were here the same time as Gordon Alcorn. Do you remember your association with him as a student?

Henry: We weren't that close--I couldn't tell you what fraternity he was in.

T: You said you were Sigma Mu Chi.

Henry: Yes--Sigma Chi now.
T: Did you take work from Prof. Slater?

Henry: No, I never did, although I was on the school board at Sumner for 20 years and I had lots of talks with Prof. Slater and went on a lot of picnics with him, etc. One time he was comparing what he made with what a public school teacher made and there was no comparison, despite all his education.

T: The salary scale for a long time was very disastrous, really. Did your father remarry when he came back?

Henry: Eventually, yes. He married Louisa McIntosh who was hired here as Dean of Women. She was a home economics teacher. They were married around 19... I'd have to look that up. I was in college at the time. She survived him a few years. They both died of strokes.

T: Didn't you mention a sister earlier?

Henry: Yes, she is two years older than I am. She lives in Tacoma and her name is Mrs. George Ward.

T: When your mother died in India then your father brought you two back?

Henry: Right.

T: Did you have any other brothers or sisters?

Henry: No. If we had stayed there, we would have had to be in a boarding school somewhere.

T: Did your father ever publish anything?

Henry: He had one book on chemistry that he published, that was all.

T: Did it have very much acceptance?

Henry: That I don't know.
T: You have never had any correspondence about it since he's gone?

Henry: No. In India he taught both chemistry and physics.

T: Where did you live in Tacoma?

Henry: 3701 North 30th--at 30th and Washington, in the North End--near 26th and Proctor. We lived there about 15 years. It was in walking distance of the College, actually.

T: Do you remember how the College was not landscaped then, was it?

Henry: The first year my father taught here, or the first year or two, we were over near Jason Lee and it was not. Then they built Jones Hall and for a few years the science building was just the main floor. I mean the ground floor.

T: Were you one of the students who helped them move?

Henry: No.

T: They had students with a wagon and a long rope and they pulled library books and pulled the color post and then these two holly trees out in the front were brought up by students. Do you remember the buildings down there--did they have four?

Henry: There were frame buildings, I recall, but how many I don't remember.

T: There was kind of a classroom building and then wasn't there a gymnasium?

Henry: Yes, I believe there was.

T: There was sort of a dormitory, which is still there, they tell me. It's incorporated into a larger building but it's an apartment house now. We still own the land where the gasoline station is located but that is all we own.

Are your memories of the College of Puget Sound happy ones?
Henry: Oh, yes, very.

T: Did you meet your wife here?

Henry: No, she was from back East. I met her later.

T: When you think in terms of your father's association with the College of Puget Sound, he must have been very busy being both a professor and Dean. Do you know of any special interests that he had in curriculum?

Henry: He was influential in a number of doctors getting their chemistry background.

T: Could you name some of those?

Henry: Brown, Tom Dodson, quite a few of them. We had a lot of pretty good students. Another thing, being on the school board, the average public school teacher has 11 weeks off. My father was teaching regular college classes, and of course, summer school, and night school, and he had about two weeks off a year; he was a full-time teacher. They don't do that any more.

T: No. Those men were beautifully dedicated—they really were. That's what made the school so good and made it strong and made it possible for us to have a foundation to build on, because everywhere, the University of Puget Sound even now has a tremendous reputation for its academic excellence. What other things can you tell me about your father?

Henry: He was head marshall for commencement services. He was a dedicated teacher, really.

T: He must've been to stay on with the salary he got, because it was small, there is no question about it. You mentioned some of the professors you had—do you remember taking courses from McMillin? What was he like?
Henry: I had him in Organic Chemistry and for Geology and he was a good teacher. He couldn't spell the same word twice but that was his only weakness.

T: I remember going into his classroom once and there was a sentence on the board and it had five misspelled words.

Henry: He was terrible in spelling, but he knew it.

T: He evidently knew the basic fundamentals but he certainly was poor on spelling and it used to embarrass me. You said you didn't have Slater but you had...

Henry: I had Seward in physics. He was a quiet person. I think he married Dr. Todd's secretary.

T: Yes. They have been wonderfully loyal through the years. They gave us $100,000 to name the dormitory Seward Hall. He inherited considerable real estate in Orange County, California, so he told me that he felt he was steward for that during his generation and for the coming generation. Did you have any education courses?

Henry: I had Dr. Wier. He was pretty grim, in a way. Of course, it was a 600 page text and it was pretty dry. I was going to become a teacher (which I never did) but we were all in there because we had to be--it wasn't by choice. He was a good teacher, as far as that goes.

T: Who were some other teachers you had?

Henry: Reneau--she was teacher of English and I majored in English.

T: Was she a little bit different?
Henry: Yes, she was. She had about 23 cats (laughter).

T: Yes, she did. She owned some property, over on 9th Street. I went over to see her to see if she would give it to us or sell it to us. Her cats dominated her house, there was no question of that. Finally, we bought the place and we couldn't clean it up, we had to tear it down. It was really... but it was in an area that we wanted for development so we bought it.

Henry: She was pushing stock in a oil or gas company in Eastern Oregon and a lot of the faculty lost their shirts off of it.

T: I know that she seemingly was well respected by students but there came a time when her presence here was not good, and she always hated Dr. Todd because he let her go. She went out to PLU and finished teaching out there.

Tell me, what has been your career or work?

Henry: I was an industrial chemist at Standard Brands in Sumner and stayed there my whole career.

T: Then you were one of the ones who helped us get the sod for the football field awhile back.

Henry: I guess, so, yes.

T: We got it two different times.

Henry: I remember that.

T: That was very, very nice and we appreciated it very much. It was quite an ordeal but I saw some fellows playing on those rocks and I just couldn't take it, so we cleaned off the area and after awhile, somehow or other, we had to have it a second time, but we appreciated it. We had a boy who was a son of a super-
intendent out there and he played football and that was one of the times when we got the football field. (He was the son of George Adams, Supt).

Then you association with the College of Puget Sound has been nice; that of your father was nice. We just regret that the salaries were so low when he was here. We will transcribe this and let you look at it, correct it and insert any dates or other material you think of, and we'll then file it with the historical material. It will be interesting. I want you to know that everybody has great appreciation for your father, but not many people knew much about him.

Henry: He never became close friends with any of the faculty. I think he felt that he shouldn't.

T: Well, as Dean, there had to be a little gap there. You can't make decisions about people and be their buddies or friends, too.

Thank you for coming in.

This will be a fine addition to our material. I am sure your father worked very hard and very closely with Dr. Todd. Dr. Todd always spoke of him most highly. Ray Powell always spoke of him most highly and liked him very, very much.

R. Franklin Thompson

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