INTERVIEW WITH
DR. RAYMOND POWELL
BY R. FRANKLIN THOMPSON
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T: What year did you come here?
P: I came here in 1936.

T: You graduated from Coe College in 1923?
P: Yes. I took work at the University of Iowa. I got my master's in 1928 and my doctorate in 1932.

T: Was your doctorate in psychology and education?
P: My doctorate was in philosophy of education. Ph.D. degree rather than a doctorate of education.

T: Did you come right out here after your Ph.D.?
P: No, I taught at Parsons College for four years—in Fairfied, Iowa.

T: Is that a Presbyterian school?
P: Yes, it was a Presbyterian school, but it isn't any longer.

T: As I recall the Methodist Church has four colleges in Iowa—Morningside, Iowa Wesleyan, Simpson and Cornell. Did Dr. Todd contact you to come out?
P: Yes, I met Dr. Todd in Chicago; and, you know, he was one of the best salesman! A regular Chamber of Commerce for Tacoma, Washington. I had never heard much about Tacoma, Washington. I was teaching then at Parsons and we had been there four years and we sort of wanted to see the West, so I met him in Chicago and he persuaded me that this was "God's country". It was August when we decided to come and we had to close up the house and move all of our goods and get out here by the time school opened. We arrived here Labor Day of 1936.
T: Tell me about Dr. Todd. He was certainly one of the Lord's anointed men, wasn't he?

P: Dr. Todd was God's man and when they made Dr. Todd they threw the mold away because he was enthusiastic, he was dedicated, he believed in the future of Tacoma and UPS and promoted their good objectives, and he was just a wonderful man.

T: I recall that he had great vision of what the College could be, and he was a tireless worker and he built a tremendous foundation. It was not easy in those days because the money he raised was from people who didn't have any tax advantage.

P: In those days, when we came (and we came in the depth of the Depression, 1936), my salary was $2200 a year. That was more or less what I was getting as a school teacher back in Iowa. You see, I taught for some six or seven years in Iowa in the public schools and I was superintendent of schools there for four years. Then, I went to graduate school, where I finished, and then on to Parsons.

T: Did you come out as head of the Education Department?

P: Nominally, yes. Dr. Weir was still on the faculty at that time. He had had a stroke a year or so before and his health was impaired, so I talked to Dr. Todd and the purpose was to come as head of the department but he didn't want to push Dr. Weir out directly; he said, "In effect, you are head of the department--acting as head--but Dr. Weir will have the title." So for one year, we worked that way and then the second year I became the head in name as well as in function.

T: Can you tell me about Dr. Weir? I never met him.

P: Dr. Weir was a scholar of the old school. He had his degree from a university in Germany--I don't recall at the moment the name--but he was a very, very deep scholar, not only in education but in philosophy, religion and even the fine arts.
A very dedicated person. Of course, I knew him after he had become ill and his health was impaired and his mind somewhat as well, but he was a very, very lovely person.

T: Who were some of the other professors?

P: There was Floyd Hite, Dr. Weir and I in the Education Department. Of course, Arthur Frederick was here at that time; and Dr. Martin, Julius Jeager in the English Department; Ray Seward, Jim Slater.

T: You knew Senator Davis?

P: Senator Davis was in full force. You know, Dr. Thompson, when I think back on some of the old timers who were here when I came, they were hard to replace.

T: They certainly were. Very few people have the kind of dedication they had.

P: Senator Davis never forgot a student's name nor his face. You would meet him on the street and he could call you by name. He had a phenomenal memory.

T: I know Dr. Brown, who is still a physician and surgeon, told me that he came from somewhere and Senator Davis took the class down to the legislature and they put Senator Davis in the chair, and he had the class recognized and all the people applauded. He said, "As we came up over a hill in a Model T car and I saw how beautiful Olympia was, I made up my mind right then that was where I would live." Of course, we have had Mary and George and his children, and some of his grandchildren almost ready to come, and his wife graduated here; so it goes right back to the kind of influence Senator Davis had.

P: He was a marvelous teacher, particularly of United States history. He taught so much by anecdotes and by personal references. He had met so many of the prominent
people of that time. Something would come up in his class and he would say, "Well, I met so and so and we did such and such." So his classes lived because he mentioned these people in this way as they were discussed.

T: When you came, where was the Education Department located?

P: It was in Jones Hall, down in the basement. We didn't actually have a department location as such. Our department was pretty much out of our offices. I started my first office on the top floor of Jones Hall and when I retired my office was in the basement, so I worked my way down!

T: You brought Del Gibbs, didn't you?

P: Del Gibbs came, I think, in 1941. I brought in Del, Annabel Lee, Beth Griesel, Joe Dolan, Mel Hoyt, Dewayne Lamka—those are some of the people I brought in.

T: They were every one a dedicated teacher. Do you remember the faculty meeting when Dr. Todd is reputed to have said that the students are going into the service and many of you ought to think in terms of what your responsibility will be?

P: Yes. I haven't thought about that for years. Remember, at that time, the students were going and some of the faculty members were going. He reminded us that now it was important for our country to be defended and we had to support our country. At the same time, he said, we mustn't forget that CPS was an important cog in the whole affair of our defense, education, etc., and that we had to support it, because some of the faculty members were thinking of going. I remember he called me into the office, because I was then thinking about going in and as a matter of fact my application was in to go into the army. He said, "We are losing our good faculty members
come back to education?

P: I came back in January of 1946 and, as you recall, the war was over and the men were coming out of the service. Almost overnight, UPS jumped from 200 students to 1500-1600. I remember, very distinctly, your saying to me (as I was thinking of going back and taking a refresher course because I had some G.I. Bill), "Don't do it. You've got to go to work because our enrollment is jumping." Remember, we had classes six days a week, early morning until late at night.

T: Was that when I asked you to be Registrar?

P: No, Registrar was during the Korean War, 1950-52.

T: Oh, yes. You were also Dean of Men.

P: I didn't become Dean of Men until 1948.

T: How long did you serve there?

P: Till about 1958--I'd have to look back for the precise date.

T: I remember you rendered a very, very great service and the students had great regard and affection for you. You were one of the ablest dean of men we ever had. After Dean of Men, what did you do?

P: During that time, I was Dean of Men, Registrar, Head of the School of Education or Department of Education and also Director of Summer School. I became Registrar during the time that Dick was recalled to active duty from 1950-1952, and when he came back, he took over the registrar's job, picking up where he left off. Then I became just Dean of Men and head of the School of Education and Director of Summer School. I don't remember the exact date that I gave up the summer school deanship and became just Dean of Men and Head of Education. Then around 1958, I gave up the Dean of Men's work and was just Director of the School of Education.
T: What year did you retire?

P: Officially, 1962, but I taught on part time for a few years after that.

T: You did some directing of student teacher work, too.

P: Yes, after I retired, that was all I did. Then I became assistant to the Dean of the University for a couple of years after I retired.

T: Was that for Dean Regester?

P: No, that was Dean Bock, the one between Regester and Thomas. Dean Bock is now Dean of the Graduate School in Business Administration at the University of Wisconsin. I was director of the educational work out at the Military Centers for some two or three years.

T: Do you remember when we met with the people on 18th Street to talk with them about the pavement?

P: Yes, I remember that. That was somewhere around 1948 or 1949, and at that time it was a dirt street and an oil mat, and the mat was getting bad and it was getting dusty, so we decided to get together and talk about it as it would be a good thing to pave it, because the University was growing and there was more traffic and more cars, etc. We put out a petition and there were a few who objected, but we finally go the required number to sign it and it was decided to pave it, or blacktop it, and the debate was about how wide the street should be. Some people wanted it narrow and some wanted it wider. The people who wanted the wider pavement prevailed, and thank goodness, that was put in.

T: Do you remember we had a dinner at the Student Center and we talked about the various widths and what it would cost each one of us and whether or not they wanted to have a boulevard with an island in the middle. I recall we talked about
it and they said they didn't want islands but they wanted a wide street and they wanted asphalt; they didn't want concrete, and we were able to do that. Then we did the same thing on Union Avenue. We had a problem there because the city owned the islands as they did on Lawrence Street. We couldn't get the water department to water the islands until the park department said they would take care of them. So finally, one day, I simply said, if we're going to landscape it, the University will have to do it. So even though the City owns them, we put the water in and took care of them, both on Lawrence and on Union Street. You remember that there was kind of a hill on Union and all kinds of earth there, and I went to the City and asked them to level it off so we could make islands and landscape it. Well, they said they just didn't have the money or the manpower. One morning, I awakened and there was all kinds of traffic and bulldozers and truck loaders, just teaming, on Union Avenue. I went over and said, "What happened here?" They said, "We have to have this earth right away because a water main broke in the north end, and unless we fill it in where it washed out, two or three houses may go down the gully." So I went home and said to my beloved Lucille, "It's an ill wind. We have been trying to get that cleaned off for two or three years and all of a sudden they clean it off in about two days, simply because they have a crisis." Then I recall we wanted to landscape it and the Kiwanis said they were willing to do it. You had a part in planting the trees, didn't you?
P: Yes, from 18th Street up to 11th. We had four different kinds of trees and I don't know that I can name them, but they are oak, maple, birch and flowering plum, or something, but four different kinds. We replaced the trees two or three times
because, as you know, some character drove along there with his truck one time and broke off half of them. Now, they are quite good size and we don’t have to worry about a truck breaking down any of them.

T: They are beautiful and it was a wonderful addition. As I recall, you were representing the Kiwanis; the President of Kiwanis, Hal Tollefson, an alumnus, was the Mayor at the time, and you came out and helped to dig the holes and plant the trees.

P: Two or three Saturdays doing it. And the wives provided the luncheon and it was quite a gala affair. It has been a real joy to watch them and, I think, quite a contribution. Also, while we are on that, as I recall, the Northwest Kiwanis also built the bus station on Lawrence.

T: Yes, that's right. We wanted a bus station and couldn't get the City to put one up and we couldn't get the bus company to put one up, so the Northwest Kiwanis built the bus station which is still there.

P: It's not being used so much for that now, but it is still there.

T: It is used as a bicycle shed, now. Since the bus lines changed the stopping place, it isn't quite as strategically located as it was.

Do you remember some of the outstanding students who went out from the School of Education?

P: I hesitate because my memory is not as good as it used to be and I'd have to go back to the catalogue to pick them up now. I can't speak his name now but he became Superintendent of the State Schools in Colorado.

T: That is Cal Frasier.

P: Cal Frasier, right.
T: And you probably had Buster Brouillet, too?

P: Yes, I was going to name him as our own State Superintendent of Public Instruction.

T: Do you remember Don Egge?

P: Don Egge is also in the State Department in Oregon.

T: Yes, second in command. Now you have had many affiliated relationships with the community, which were most valuable. We have already mentioned the Kiwanis, and you went up the chairs in the Kiwanis Club. You have been an outstanding leader in the First Presbyterian Church. What has been your responsibility there?

P: I came to the Presbyterian Church in 1936. At that time, we had an interim pastor. We came from Cedar Rapids and they were considering a young pastor from Cedar Rapids. It so happened that I had been a member of his church, the Westminster Presbyterian Church in Cedar Rapids—Dr. McCullough. So when they found out that we were from Cedar Rapids (myself, my wife, and, of course, my wife's mother who was almost a charter member back there and who was living with us), I was put on the committee that invited him to come out as a candidate; and, ultimately, he was called to be pastor, which he was until 1949. Then the next year, I became a member of the Board of Deacons, and I served on that for two or three years. Then about 1940, I was elected to the Board of Elders and have served there since, some 36-37 years. I was also on the committee who chose and invited our present minister, Dr. Lindsey, to come to the church. So I have served on many committees there and been very happy and feel that I have been of some service in the church.

T: You have actually been greeter there for many years, haven't you?

P: For some 30 years, greeter at the door.
T: Since you retired, you quite often go to Hawaii, do you not?

P: This will be tenth winter in Hawaii. We go over on the 10th of January and stay until about the 10th of April.

T: That's a wonderful way to avoid the snow, the rain and the cold and fog here.

P: During the time that we were over there, we have met many very, very lovely people--among them being Dr. and Mrs. Franklin Thompson, Dick Smith, Harry Brown--and we have also attended some the student meetings, parent-student nights--over there, where we told prospective students about the joys of UPS.

In conclusion, may I say that Dr. Todd was right when I met him in Chicago that time, saying that this was the place to be in the future. There was a real future for CPS, now UPS. We have been very happy here. We have had chances to leave many times, as you no doubt know. I was invited to go back to Cornell College, the Methodist school in Iowa; I was invited to go back to my own alma mater, and two or three chances in kind; but somehow we just could not leave Tacoma and CPS. It has been a joy to work with all the people there, among them yourself; and Dean Regester was one of our dearest friends, and so it has been a real pleasure.

T: I want to say, Ray, that you have been one of the most outstanding faculty members in the years that I have been at the University of Puget Sound, and when I go out to alumni meetings, they all ask, "How is Dr. Powell; give him my regards." You are enshrined in the hearts of hundreds and hundreds of students and you have done a great job in making outstanding teachers. It must give you a deep sense of satisfaction of the heart to know that the influence that you have had is profound and carries on, generation after generation. It certainly has been a great joy to work with you and to be associated with you and Margaret. We have enjoyed it very much and we are most grateful for your continuing interest.