INTERVIEW WITH RUTH PAULINE ROCKWOOD
BY R. FRANKLIN THOMPSON

June 22, 1978

T: Ruth, you are Dr. Todd's granddaughter. You've brought in a copy of Dr. Todd's history which was his own personal copy, right?

R: Yes, it is and it was given to me. If this isn't a copy of what you have, you are certainly welcome to borrow it.

T: I'm sure it is the same. There are very few copies. Is there a copy in the library, Maureen?

M: I think Mr. Taylor told me they made two xerox copies other than the one we have.

T: Mrs. Phibbs has a copy, hasn't she?

M: I don't know about that.

T: She had one but whether she still has it or has returned it to the library, I don't know. Ruth Pauline, you were saying that Dr. Todd wrote sort of a history of his own life called . . .

R: The Practical Mystic and it was a volume bound similar to this one. It had a bluish gray cover.

T: It's of a more personal nature.

R: Yes.

T: I'd like to use that some time, if I could borrow it from you, and go over it.

R: If I can be sure to get it back, because it is very special.

T: Don't worry. Then you brought in this volume of bound letters.
R: They were presented to him in 1942 at the time of his retirement, and there are letters from people all over the country; people with whom he had association through the College, either financially or personally or just former students, members of the faculty, and I have indexed some that might have little anecdotes mentioned that you might want to see.

T: I see a letter here from Dr. Jessup of the Carnegie Corporation and, of course, Dr. Todd got that wonderful gift from Carnegie.

R: I think there is one from Nathaniel Butler of Columbia and one from J. C. Penney.

T: Bishop Titus Lowe.

R: A number of the older church bishops and minister friends, newspaper people, Harry Brown of Brown and Haley Candy Company. It is fun to just look through them.

T: It is, because I see a good many familiar ones. There’s the J. C. Penney letter.

R: Here’s his picture from a newspaper clipping, a full-page advertisement on his anniversary. I just stuck that in there.

T: It is really very historical and one of these times when we set up the archives.

R: It is a very precious collection. Then I have these two photographs from way back in the family and they are so clear. Over to the right in this one is a team of horses and my Grandfather wrote, "It was during that first year that I took my one horse and went over to Mrs. Todd’s uncle across one county and made a trade for two colts, half sisters about the same age and
near alike that when they were in the pasture I could scarcely distinguish one from the other. I took with me a young man from Brother Fitch's farm who put in with my horse a good old horse who was used to breaking colts. We started back after the trade was made and put those green colts alternately into harness with this good steady horse. By the time we got home, both colts were well broken, though one formed the habit of pulling back when tied. These colts made one of the finest little teams in the whole section. We had a light harness for them and a piano box buggy which we shined up. Everybody thought I had made a good trade and were rather proud that their young preacher had such an outfit. It wasn't expensive, either, for a man whose income was $800 a year. The fact that I liked horses and was a good trader showed that I had 'Methodist' preacher's blood' in me. There came to our house that next fall a baby, or son, and how we did enjoy him. It made the family circle complete." And this was my father, Edward Paul Todd, who was born October 7, 1888, at the home of his mother's parents in Caledonia, Ringo County, Iowa, not far from Mount Ayr. Aren't those clear?

T: They are wonderful. When you are through with them, we'd like to have them for the archives.

R: This was one of the rare pictures that I have of the family--my Grandfather, Grandmother, my father who was the oldest, and then Wesley and Junia Todd Hallen, and Florence.

T: That's a beautiful picture, isn't it?

R: I like that one and then there is another one.

T: At what age do you remember your Grandfather?
R: I had all four grandparents until I was 18 and one interesting anecdote. He retired the year I graduated in 1942. I recall that particular day and it was rather a sentimental time for him, because it was his time of retirement. We were taken across the stage alphabetically and each one rose in turn. Todd was fairly near the end of the alphabet and I stepped out into the aisle and Dr. Yeager said, "Step aside, please." and left me standing and I thought to myself what hadn't I turned in, how terrible, how embarrassing not to tell me that I wasn't graduating, and I couldn't imagine what I could have done to have fouled up and how embarrassing to my family and for me! They went through the V, W, X, Y, Z, and finally he leaned over to me and said, "Your Grandfather wanted to give you the last diploma he presented," and by that time I was ready to dissolve in tears but I went across the stage and received the last diploma. Another thing: at the final convocation or assembly or whatever you want to call it, he was quite inclined to speak at great length, and on this particular day it was no exception. My Grandmother was there, too, and very seldom did she take an active part in things but she was always very much behind him and with him and a supporter. She was a very short and round little lady and her feet didn't touch the ground when she was sitting. As he went on and on with his speaking, her feet were sort of dangling and she was not one who enjoyed wearing corsages because she was little and rather dumpy and they had given her a bouquet of red roses, which she had lying across her arm; as she became a little impatient, she switched them to
the other side and the audience would laugh, and this would make him go on at greater length, remembering and recalling things. Finally, he said something and I don't think ever in my life had I heard her contradict him and she stood up and walked right up to him and said, "Ed, that just is not so." At that point, everybody just cracked up and it broke the tension and he ended his speech on a happy note, and she went and sat down and so did he! It was rather special. I was looking for a little booklet that I had intended to bring with me and I can't imagine why it isn't here. It was a brief report which he made in 1932, I think to the Board, which gave a brief history of what had happened up to then and what some of his dreams were.

T: We will work that in when it comes time for the history.

R: Here it is, and the date is February 18 and 19, 1932. You can take a copy of it and it gives a brief history of the College.

T: Maureen can make copies of it.

R: I might mention that Professor O. C. Whitney of Potsdam, New York, is related and he had taught there at the College for awhile as a professor of history and he had written a United States history book and, of course, I have a copy at home. I believe he married one of Grandfather's sisters.

T: I take it that Professor Whitney is gone.

R: Oh, yes, long gone. When I was doing graduate work at Syracuse University in New York I went up and visited them, in a little old New England type home and it snowed that night and I was in a cold, cold bedroom upstairs
with a down comforter and tall as I am, it didn't quite cover north or south, one or the other!

The Tacoma News Tribune carried a little article in February in the "Time Machine" column by Caroline Kellogg. She has a brief summary.

T: Let us have a copy of that. I don't think we got that.

R: Okay. Then one appeared in June of 1942 in the Christian Advocate and that was one of my favorite pictures of them at the time of his retirement. He is holding that book of letters and I believe they gave them a silver service and Richard Turner, I think, presented that picture of Jones Hall to him.

T: That's such a good picture. It's so characteristic of both of them.

R: Yes, it's especially good of both of them.

T: He was such a great man.

R: I came across these two letters, one dated June 8, 1910, and June 14, 1910, and one is from the Office of the President at DePauw University and apparently my Grandfather had written to him concerning a decision about accepting the presidency at Willamette University. He did come from Willamette University as vice president to C.P.S. and he is replying to that letter; and then another man wrote, "You have been elected to the presidency of Willamette University. We are both glad and sorry. Glad because a much merited honor has been conferred upon you and sorry because we will lose you here in Washington. Allow me to congratulate you and wish you most abundant success in the new field open to you. Kindest personal regards to you and Mrs. Todd, I am Boyd Doughty." Those date back awhile.
MT: How far back do you remember your Grandfather?

R: Oh, from a very small child. We spent Christmases with both grandparents. My Mother's parents, the Hodges, lived in Salem, Oregon. My parents had met at Willamette University, so we had ties with both schools. My daughter, Peggy, went to Willamette, and she graduated sixty years after he left there, and he had been given by the students a silver loving cup with two handles, presented to Grandmother and him, when he left there, and I turned it around and on the other side wrote, "For Great Granddaughter, Peggy, on her graduation, May 1973," and gave it to her. I remember going to their home for Christmas and for many occasions and of course, as they became older, we were there often and my folks were very devoted to them and took them for rides, etc.

T: What was your Father's work?

R: My Father was in the field of education, and he started as a high school teacher and then he was principal at Chehalis, superintendent at Napavine, superintendent at Eatonville during the early twenties at a time when he was, I believe, the second highest administrator in the State of Washington and he received an income of $2400 a year! (Laughter) It was a wealthy little lumbering town at that time. Then he was superintendent of DuPont Schools; he had been Deputy County Superintendent of Pierce County Public Schools; he had been Director at Annie Wright Seminary.

T: You had an Uncle Wesley. He is still living in Portland?
R: Yes, he is still living in Portland at Twerwilliger Plaza, a retirement home. He is not too well. He has one son, Horace, who much prefers being called Ted, and he has a lovely wife and three children—a girl who is now a doctor and two boys who are still in graduate school.

T: What did your Uncle do?

R: His wife was a musician and played the piano beautifully and was a very well known composer and teacher and she became an invalid in her later years and he was pretty much at home with her and he ran a school for small boys and girls while she was a teacher of music and they had a big shop in the basement and they did all sorts of handcrafts. It was sort of a team relationship.

T: Was this a school for exceptional children?

R: No, anyone.

T: Your Father was the oldest of the four.

R: Yes, he was the oldest; then Wesley, then Junia Todd Hallen who was quite a wit and was very crippled in later years and was quite well known for her book reviews which she gave in her home, at times when she would be suffering just untold pain but people wouldn't know about it. She could say and do things and get away with it, that no one else could.

T: She was recognized as an outstanding person in many ways. Then your Aunt Florence was quite a person interested in art, wasn't she?

R: Very much and she never married; she was at home. She did graduate work at the University of Washington. She enjoyed her painting and her friends and lived here all of her life.
this school when it was not financially stable and built a solid foundation and he did a tremendous job. I don't know how he did it. He must have had to have been away a great deal of the time.

R: He mentioned this in one of the books and I was glad to see him express appreciation to Grandmother for carrying the load all the time because those children pretty much did grow up without him, and in these letters in the book there are a lot of references about the many churches he went to, the young people's groups, and the cheer. Many of them remember the part where he had everyone, from the children to everybody there, shouting, "Our University, Our University" and there was a little jingle apparently to go with it, and I gather that he actually led a cheer. I have difficulty picturing my dignified Grandfather doing this, but apparently it was recalled by many people and made quite an impression on them.

T: To this day, when I go out to churches, people say to me, "I remember Dr. Todd, and he got us all to say, 'Our University, our University.'" He evidently did a very fine job of it, because it is always recalled with appreciation. Of course, I have nothing but profound admiration for him. About four or five years ago, I asked a woman to help us and she said, "When I was a little girl I used to watch Dr. Todd come and ask my Father for money. He'd park his car and then walk back and forth as though he were getting up courage to come in. We'd say to my Father, 'When he comes in, tease him, tease him. Don't tell him you'll give him money right away.'"

That just broke my heart, because I've been through that kind of thing and
I knew what he was going through. She ended up by giving us a quarter of
a million dollars and we were actually reaping benefits from his work.

R: He had nothing but the greatest of admiration for you, too, and was very
very fond of you and thought highly of you always.

T: It was mutual, you know. Three months after I came (and I realized he
could hit every building on the campus with a b-b gun), I called him in and
told him, "I got this money and you worked it out," and his eyes would
sparkle. You've probably heard about this, but once to my amazement
I got a check for $1000.00 from the brewery. I saved it and I called him in
and I said, "Dr. Todd, do you know what this money is?" He said, "Yes."
and you know what it is, don't you?" I said, "Yes, it's from the brewery."
He said, "No, no. It's tainted money. It's tainted money. 'Taint enough,
'taint enough!" (Laughter) I have never forgotten that. We had such a
fine rapport.

Then I said to him, "Doctor. I have great favor to ask of you." He
said, "What is that?" I said, "You're the only one who can write a history
of the University because you have been with it since 1913." He said, "Do
you really think so?" I said, "Yes. Why don't we get you an office downstairs
in Jones Hall. You get yourself a secretary and just work on the history an
hour or two a day, whatever you feel like. Some days if you don't feel like
it, don't do it."

R: That meant a great deal to him and it was so nice of you to let him "hang
around".

T: Well, it gave him a base and he could get out of the house and really
he did a phenomenal job on that history and he was the logical one and he
was the only one who could do it.

R: I was away during those years. I went back to Syracuse University
and then was in Washington, D.C. and then my daughter, Peggy, was born
just about two weeks after his death, so he didn't get to be a Great Grandfather.

T: You were in school when the war clouds were gathering and do you
remember the time when the students went away to war?

R: Oh, yes. I remember December 7, 1941, and coming out of First Metho-
dist Church and some young man who had gone home and come back mentioned
something about how Pearl Harbor was bombed and we just had to stop and
think just exactly where Pearl Harbor was and all of us hastened home and
kept our ears to the radio and the next day at the University things were very
solemn and in the days following there were young men leaving, and our
graduating class had many fewer young men, who either didn't ever come
back or who delayed their graduation, of course, till many years later. The
most traumatic and heartfelt occasion for all of us, I think, was when the
Oriental students were taken away to camp and their presentation of the cherry
trees, out in front of the buildings there. There was a very poignant ceremony
and there were tears shed by everybody because we felt terrible. These people
could not be enemies—they were our friends and to think of them being put in
a camp! I remember one time, I think it was Kay Woods Haley and Wolfred Woods
and I, went out to Puyallup and visited some of them through the fence, and it was something we could never forget. We just couldn't imagine these people being considered to be part of the "enemy".

T: Were you actually at that convocation?
R: Yes.

T: What was it like? Was it the Japanese who did the program?
R: Yes, they presented it. There were tears shed there. I can't remember who took part in it—a number of them, as I recall, did. The trees were presented then as a living memory.

T: We were very careful when we built the buildings to preserve some of them, as you know. There are about eight of them still, and they are beautiful trees.

R: When the old student union building was built, I was there when the cornerstone was laid and one of the student body officers who helped put some mortar on it as we sealed it up with a copy of the Tamanawas, the school paper, etc.

T: That was Kittredge Hall.
R: Yes, Kittredge, the old student center.

T: Do you remember anything about your Grandfather getting the money for Kittredge?
R: No. During the four years I was in school, I really had very little contact. I was so conscious of being his Granddaughter that both of us leaned over backwards. I don't think I was in his office maybe more than three times the whole four years I was there and I'm sure there were people who thought I had free tuition, which I didn't, there was not one penny at all that came
from any influence of his. I think both of us were so conscious of the fact that we were related that I wanted to do it on my own and he wanted to stay out of my hair, I think, so that was pretty much the feeling.

T: Do you recall any special recognition that came to him?
R: No, other than things referred to in these books.

T: Do you remember anything about the Hill Campaign?
R: No. When he was with his family and at home, at least in my presence, I don't recall his going into detail at all about matters concerning the College.

T: He got this money from the Hill Foundation with the stipulation that they would give a quarter of a million if he would raise three-quarters of a million, and of course he did and it was wonderful, really wonderful. You were probably too young to remember when they moved up to this campus?
R: Well, I do remember, vaguely, the old buildings down on the site of Jason Lee, and I remember sitting on the front steps of their house and watching students go in. One of the earliest things I remember was at Jones Hall in the auditorium when Madam Shumann-Heink, the famous German opera star came and Grandmother took me as a very little girl and we sat in the front row. After she sang with this great booming voice, she came down and my Grandmother introduced me, and this was really the first famous person I remember meeting. A bouquet of flowers had been presented to her and they were snapdragons and in her very gutteral German voice she asked me if I knew how to make the dragons snap and I didn't and she
leaned over and pinched them and gave me some of them. So to this day, everytime I see a snapdragon I think of my Grandmother and Madam Schumann-Heink there at U.P.S. in Jones Hall.

R: It must've been a very interesting move because the students pulled the Color Post.

R: You mentioned Color Post! That was the next thing I was going to mention, too. I am sure if he realized that we were no longer having a color post or that we were no longer maroon and white, this would be quite a shock.

T: The academic colors are maroon and white. The sports colors are green, blue and yellow. But officially, we have never changed the academic colors. If you notice our honorary degree hoods are maroon and white.

This was a very strange accident. We had a student body president in the height of the tension by the name of Clay Loges. He, theoretically, took a survey of the students and said they wanted to change from maroon and white, but no one ever saw the votes; but he just wanted this done so he could be different.

I was always sorry about that Color Post, but when we got as many as 700 freshmen and we didn't even have room enough to seat them in Jones Hall and there was no way to get them in speedily and no way to get the seniors out, and 5000 at commencement, it just became impossible.

R: It was a sentimental tradition that went with a smaller school.

T: That's right. Of course, your Grandfather had seen this at Cornell or Perdue and it worked out beautifully, and Western Washington copied it from him. Then we had problems because P.L.U. sawed off the Color Post three
different times and then we made a concrete one and they drove a jeep in and pulled it over, and painted it; but I was awfully sorry because Dr. Todd had cherished it so much, but there became a time when we just could not do it.

Can you characterize Mrs. Hallen a little more for me? She was tall and good looking.

R: She was not especially tall, no. The thing most people remember her for was her dark, snappy eyes. She was just full of the dickens all the time. As I mentioned earlier, she could say and do things, with a raise of the eyebrow, that other people might look askance or misinterpret, perhaps, but you knew exactly what she meant and, as I said, she could say and do it and get away with it when someone else couldn't. She read just books and books and books and I think publishers would even send them to her for reviewing, and she earned money by giving book reviews in her home and sold season tickets to people to come to her home and she would sit, usually, on a stool with a long skirt covering her withered legs; and her little hands, in later years, became very crippled and warped and gnarled, the fingers were bent almost sideways. She suffered excruciating pain. If we would be there after she had given a talk, most people, for the most part, would not have realized that she was suffering at all.

T: Florence was particularly interested in art?

R: Very artistic. She painted, and weaving was a favorite of hers.

T: I remember she wore large hats.

R: Yes. She was quite dramatic. Dorothy Newcomber was a special friend
of hers and they did a good many things together and spent a lot of time over on Vashon Island. The care of her parents and she was with them most always, and I can imagine it must've been very difficult for her at times. She was always, even to the time of her death, their little girl and it was very difficult for her to have a life of her own, I am sure.

T: You were in school just at the time of the war.

R: 1938-1942.

T: The war started on December 7, 1941. There is a rumor that Dr. Todd appeared before the faculty and said that the students are going out very rapidly and he said he was sure the faculty would have to assume their responsibility and that if they went to war the school would hold a spot until they came back. A good many of them did go.

R: Bob Smith, I know, was one who left. In fact, I ran into him in Washington, D.C., at a program one evening. He was sitting in back of me and I heard this voice and turned around and there he was. Howard _______ was another one.

T: Wasn't he in art?

R: Yes, he was—well, he was advisor for this yearbook at the time when Dick Haley was business manager, I was editor and Howard Oyster was a new, young professor. Not a one of us had had anything to do with a yearbook before this one was put out. I hadn't even worked on the staff before.

T: There was Shelmidine, Lantz and Powell.

R: I ran into him in Washington, D.C., too.

T: I imagine there must've been half the faculty ultimately went. Neil Frank
was coach and he went--a good many others.

You used to have traditions. We talked about the Color Post. Do you remember Campus Day?

R: Oh, yes. Campus Day--tug of war through mud would be particularly appropriate. It seemed almost always it would rain on that day. There was a tradition, pre-pollution days, of an enormous bonfire in the middle of the football field, and the great tradition was to make the tug of war and the bonfire.

T: Then you had Homecoming Queen and May Queen.

R: We also had the hatchet.

T: Oh, yes, the hatchet. I wish I knew where it was. It has disappeared and nobody knows where it is.

R: It was in our basement for awhile--many years ago. People used to come and circle the house and Mother would look out the window and there would people peering in the basement (laughter).

T: Tell me about May Queen?

R: The May Queens were selected by the students, one each year, and I think members of the Spurs formed a court; those would be girls selected at the end of their freshman year and serving as sophomores--a service organization. Usually, we wore long formals and in the olden days garlands of ivy and such were used. They usually did it out in back of Jones Hall.

T: They actually had a May pole and the girls danced, etc.

R: Yes.

T: Tell me about your Grandmother.
R: She was a little short lady with white hair. There was no disease, ailment or condition that chicken soup and cup custard would not cure. I have two memories. She taught me how to peel carrots and I still have the scar, when instead of going away from me as she had told me to do when I peeled I came toward me and cut my wrist. Another time, she was called to the phone when she was helping my sister and me, especially teaching Carol how to crack eggs. There was a whole basket full of eggs and by the time she came back, Carol had cracked about three dozen eggs, very nicely separating the yolks and the whites and we had angel food cake and custards etc., to use them up. She liked to entertain but usually nothing very formal. The little dining room table they had in the little house on Alder I have at my house now and it has 12-12 inch leaves and I can extend it so that it will seat 18. The original old heavy leather seated chairs with ladder backs are there. There is a host chair and four others. I don't know what happened to the others. There surely must've been a even number.

T: She was a great teammate for your Grandfather, wasn't she?

R: Yes. She wasn't able to walk over her. I think she had quite an influence and they worked together very well. She had a mind of her own. She was one who would tell him off, but she would never do it in public. They would have their words by themselves.

T: I never shall forget that shortly after we came we had Lord Halifax here. Were you at that convocation?

R: I don't believe I was. I remember hearing about it.
T: You were probably away. Lord Halifax came and we had a special luncheon. The British Embassy in Seattle called me and said they would like to have him come and would we be interested in entertaining him. We said yes and he spoke to 27,000 people down at the shipyards and we had a special convocation in his honor. I said to the British Ambassador, "What is the protocol?" He said, "He should be called, 'Ambassador Plenipotentiary to her Majesty's Islands and all the Seas'. Lady Halifax will be with him and his son will be with him but we will only have Lord Halifax speak." We had a luncheon for about 250 in Kittredge. Everything went very smoothly and very well, and it came time to dismiss. I never shall forget your Grandmother, God bless her, took her cane and rapped on the table and said, "Mr. President, we would like to hear from Mrs. Halifax!" (Laughter) I said, "Bless you, Mrs. Todd, but we promised Mrs. Halifax that if she would be kind enough to accompany her husband we would not impose on her." Lady Halifax got up and said "Well, now, I think when someone asks about it I should get up and say a few words," so she spoke briefly and was very gracious about it. But I could recognize right then that your Grandmother had a mind of her own and she was not going to just let something happen without proper recognition. She was always so very, very wonderful and so very, very splendid.

Dr. Todd was a person who was so outstanding and so appreciative of the development of the school. I used to talk to him about the buildings and where they should be located. Of course, he had his dreams, as you
know. I once talked to him about that stone that was dedicated to Learning, Good Government and Christian Religion. It was placed back of what is now Anderson Hall, facing north, and I think Dr. Todd and Mr. Robbins had put it there something like 1922, before they moved up there, and at that time they sort of anticipated that the campus might face north. They had a platform and bricks, etc. We had three car accidents where people hit the platform and we finally decided that we would have to move it to where it is now, south of Jones Hall. But I was a little worried for fear I had hurt him because we had moved the cornerstone of the campus. But he was very gracious about it. I used to talk to him about the buildings and he would say, "Make them beautiful and keep the type of architecture."

R: I remember him mentioning that.

T: I had a lot of pressure put on me to build a glass palace right in the middle of the campus. When we built the fieldhouse, I said, "This is not an academic building and it is way off to one side, so let's make it as..."

R: Times change, too.

T: That's right. It is very interesting, because he had Mr. Sutton, as you know, who worked out the college architecture and came up with this modified Tudor architecture plan. But they didn't have to worry about parking. Of course, the arches were supposed to be all over the campus but that would cost as much as another building, and I was sorry we never could follow up on the arches.
Did he ever mention anything about his relationship to the Collins family in Portland?

R: I knew that they had a very great influence and had been very helpful. I know the college was his life.

T: You know Truman Collins who was Mr. E. S. Collins' son told me something interesting and special about your Father. Truman's father had this unusual interest in Methodist missionaries and he was the one who established the missionaries' pension fund. When I was on the Council on Finance and Administration, I found there was $22 million in that fund, the income from which was for missionary pensions. Truman Collins told me that of all the people who asked his father for money Dr. Todd was the only one Mr. Collins took home for dinner and to stay overnight.

R: Well, isn't that special.

T: He had such a great regard and affection for him.

R: I believe there are two letters in there from members of the Collins family and the heading on the paper is from the estate.

T: Mr. Collins died, I think, shortly after your Grandfather died.

R: If there are other things, I would be glad to talk to you again.

T: We will transcribe this and then send it to you and you can edit it, or if it reminds you of other things, you can add that.

We appreciate this very much and we have great admiration for your career. It has been a very interested one of teaching and being associated with education.
R: I have enjoyed being out at Lakes High School, Hutloff and Clover Park School District.