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Victor Peyron

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Oral History Interview with Victor Peyron, Class of 1952
September 17, 2021

Meg Miner: This is Meg Miner. I'm the archivist at Illinois Wesleyan University, and I am on the phone today talking to one of our alumni to do an oral history interview. This is, um, September 17th, and I am speaking with Victor Peyron, and Mr. Peyron, if you would please introduce yourself and how you are affiliated with Wesleyan, and we'll have a conversation then.

Victor Peyron: Hi, yes. Well, I am Victor Peyron. I graduated in 1952. And, uh, I was in the music school. And I lived at in Brokaw hospital. Had—Had a room and board job. I was with, Phi Mu Alpha, I was a member of them. And I played in the Bloomington-Normal symphony on French horn. Got that?

Miner: Yes! I do. Yeah.

Peyron: Okay, you want some more?

Miner: Um, well, maybe we can talk a little bit more in detail about some of the things you just mentioned, if that's okay. Um, I didn't know that—

Peyron: Okay.

Miner: --students lived in Brokaw hospital so you said you got room and board there. What did you have to do to, uh, to get that?

Peyron: I'd be there from... three... or from four o'clock until eight o'clock in the morning.

Miner: So you were working like a s—

Peyron: I was an—I was an orderly.

Miner: Okay. Orderly on the night shift.

Peyron: Yes.

Miner: Wow, that must have been interesting.

Peyron: It was. My room was just two doors from the morgue.

Miner: Oh dear.

[Peyron laughs]

Miner: Well, um, my goodness, I had not heard this before. So, is this an arrangement you found on your own, or did the university offer these kinds of, uh—

Peyron: One my friends, Dale Bigger, he tipped me off to it. There were three of us and one of us had to be there every...night. One of the three of us.

Miner: Oh good, so you didn't have to do it every single day you a—

Peyron: No.

Miner: --little bit of a break.

Peyron: No.

Miner: Wow, that was some schedule, yeah, I was gonna say at night—cause your being in music, you probably had a lot of evening performances.

Peyron: Well I didn't do an awful lot for the room and board, but, it was, an obligation.

Miner: Yeah... [Miner laughs]... so, um, you were also Phi Mu Alpha, and you were in the education program right? The music education program?

Peyron: Yes.

Miner: Is that right? Okay. So, how did you get interested in music education... as your major?

Peyron: Uh... I just... like music.

Miner: Okay, well—that's a good start. And then the Bloomington-Normal Symphony, was that, um, something you did as part of your curriculum or was that something you just... did to expand your—

Peyron: Is that—that was the, um, Bloomington-Normal Symphony was regularly playing, and I happened to be taking lessons from the first horn player, and he wanted me in there, so...
[laughs]

Miner: Well I guess it helps to have someone like that on your side.

Peyron: It all depends on who you know.

Miner: That's so true, wow. So, um, when you were, uh, then on campus I also, um, I looked at—you up in the yearbook and it says you were in collegiate choir too, so what other kinds of—

Peyron: Yes.

Miner: --campus activities did you do?

Peyron: Well, that was about it.

Miner: Well, it's a pretty full schedule.

Peyron: Yeah...it sure was. And I—after I graduated from there I taught, uh... well...let's do this first. I graduated in '52, and I was on leave from the Army. Because I had already enlisted before I came to the end of the graduation year. And then, I got my Master's at ISU... in 1955.

Miner: So between your graduation in '52 and then getting your Master's, did you have to go into the Army for a while?

Peyron: I was in three years, yes.

Miner: Okay. And um, so this was during the Korean War would—were you shipped overseas?

Peyron: No, I was in the Fifth Army Band down in Chicago.

Miner: Okay.

Peyron: We played a broadcast every Saturday morning on WGN.

Miner: Oh...great! So you had a three year--

Peyron: And—

Miner: Oh, go ahead.

Peyron: Go ahead.

Miner: No, that's okay, you talk.

Peyron: I was gonna say I graduated in '52 and taught school--at school of music for two years at Chenoa, Illinois. Just up the road a little piece. And I worked for, uh—but I found out that that

was not for me. After two years of teaching, I dropped out of teaching, and I worked for World Book Encyclopedia for 23 years.

Miner: Wow.

Peyron: Finishing as a sales manager for the country of Canada.

Miner: Wow.

Peyron: And when computers came out, they all but put World Book Encyclopedia out of business.

Miner: Oh, boy. Yeah.

Peyron: Yep. And then I sold insurance for 20 years. I was 23 years with World Book, 20 years sold for Franklin Life, out of Blooming—out of uh, Springfield. It's a local company.

Miner: Wow.

Peyron: And then I moved to Florida, in retirement. I sang down here, in the Tampa Bay Master Chorale, for ten years. I'm—I'm 90 now. If you... probably figured that already. But, uh, I was married 64 years, until my wife died. She was Marguerite. And we had two children. Lynne, L-Y-N-N-E, and Randy. And I found then that the second time around wasn't bad, it was great. For five years, I've enjoyed life with Genevieve.

Miner: My goodness.

Peyron: That's probably more than you wanted.

Miner: That—no, this is fascinating. So, you um—my gosh, you have had quite a range of activities and stayed very active. When you were doing, um, the World Book Encyclopedia, at—was all of that sales, all—that you did the whole time? And then also insurance?

Peyron: Yes.

Miner: Okay.

Peyron: Yes. Yes.

Miner: So you made a switch from, um, being a music educator and then into sales, and probably did quite a lot of traveling—[laughs]—with uh—

Peyron: Oh yea—

Miner: —as well—

Peyron: I flew out of Chicago into Canada, for five years I flew in and out.

Miner: Wow.

Peyron: I never lived up there.

Miner: My goodness. And then, when you were, um, in the Army, for the three years, and with the Fifth Army Band, was that—did that overlap with the time that you were also teaching in Chenoa?

Peyron: Uh, no.

Miner: Okay.

Peyron: I was—I was in three years... after I uh, graduated in... from college, and uh, let's see, get my things straight here... I was in the band after I graduated.

Miner: From Wesleyan.

Peyron: Yes.

Miner: Okay and then you got your masters and then you taught. Is that right?

Peyron: Well, I got my Master's while I taught.

Miner: Okay.

Peyron: I could commute and go at night

Miner: Yeah, yeah. Wow. Busy schedule. When did you marry Marguerite?

Peyron: Let's see, uh... we were married, uh, 64 years... right after I graduated from Wesleyan... one day, and got married the next day in Bloomington. And my, wife promised my mother that I would finish school before I got married.

[Miner laughs]

Peyron: And I was already signed up in the Army because the Korean War was hot on my tail to get drafted and I didn't want to do that. So I signed right in on the band.

Miner: So you met Marguerite then in Bloomington, or near your home?

Peyron: I met her—she was going to ISU.

Miner: Okay... all right, and you were true to your word. Or your—your wife was true to your word to your mom. That's great.

Peyron: She what?

Miner: She was—she kept her promise to your mother.

[Peyron laughs]

Peyron: Oh yeah, yeah, yep.

Miner: Missed it by a day.

Peyron: We got married—I got married the—the day after I graduated.

Miner: Yeah.

Peyron: And I was in the Army at the same time.

Miner: Wow.

Peyron: And when we left there we went back to Fort Sheridan, Illinois. And uh, I was in the Army for that three years.

Miner: Hm. Hm. What else do you remember from campus activities? I know you were probably really busy with all of your music schedule, were you involved in any other kinds of activities on campus? I mean if—were you—like—as part of band did you do any of the um, things for the athletics department?

Peyron: Yeah. I played—I played in the marching band.

Miner: Okay. Who directed it at that time?

Peyron: Pardon?

Miner: Who was the director of the band at that time?

Peyron: Um, Maurice Willis.

[Editor's note: Mr. Peyron followed up with a correction: the director he was speaking about was George Scott.]

Miner: Okay. He was a long time band director here. What do you remember about those experiences?

Peyron: Well, they were... I don't know it's been—[laughs]—it's been a long time.

Miner: [laughs]—okay, sure, yeah, yeah. What your, uh—Phi Mu Alpha, uh, friends then, did you ever stay in touch with them or what you were—?

Peyron: Oh yeah, I still have friends that, uh, were in, uh, Phi Mu Alpha.

Miner: Wow.

Peyron: Yeah—Bob Guenzler—he's been active around Wesleyan.

Miner: Mmmhmm. That's great. Well are there other aspects of you—either your Wesleyan years or others that you wanted to share with us?

Peyron: Mmm no. I guess that's about it.

Miner: Well it sounds like you're very good at reinventing yourself, and uh—

Peyron: I'm amazed that I remember all this—I... And when you get it all done, send me a copy, will you?

Miner: I absolutely will do that. Let me go ahead and sign off the recording, and we will talk about some other details.

Peyron: Okay.

Miner: Thanks so much for sharing your time.