

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**  
**HIST 5960 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:**  
**INTERVIEW WITH MR. RUDOLPH ALEXANDER**

**ORAL HISTORY REVIEW**  
**WITH**  
**MR. RUDOLPH ALEXANDER**

**BY: JEFF PRINCE**  
**OCTOBER 2, 2001**

**EAST CAROLINA UNIVERSITY**

**HISTORY 5960 ORAL HISTORY PROJECT:**

**INTERVIEW WITH MR. RUDOLPH ALEXANDER**

**General topic of interview:** A look back at the life experiences of Mr. Alexander. Also, a look at how a former alumni of East Carolina Teachers College came back to his alma mater to take a position of Assistant Dean of Student Affairs.

**NARRATOR:** RUDOLPH ALEXANDER

**INTERVIEWER:** JEFF PRINCE

**DATE:** October 2, 2001

**PLACE:** Residence of Mr. Alexander  
Greenville, North Carolina

**PERSONAL DATA:**

Birthdate: 1930

Spouse: yes

Occupation: retired

**BIOGRAPHY**

Rudolph Alexander was the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs before he retired on June 3, 1995. He attended East Carolina Teachers College, as it was first called, in the winter quarter of 1949. He graduated in May 1953, earning a Bachelor degree in social studies and English, with a master degree in education. After graduating, Mr. Alexander was drafted into the Army for two years. When he was released from the Army, he worked with the Boy Scouts of America for six and a half years. After his job with the Boy Scouts, he was hired at East Carolina University as Assistant Dean of Student Affairs which changed to Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs when he retired. Rudolph Alexander was the creator of the Performing Arts Series which brought in a great deal of highly recognizable faces in the entertainment industry. The series was eventually named after him. Throughout Mr. Alexander's career, he provided students with opportunities to broaden their horizons. He believed that education is not just about earning a degree but it is about taking part in the social experiences that a university offers. Rudolph Alexander retired on June 30, 1995, and is living in Greenville, North Carolina with his wife. They are both enjoying life.

many

had

worked at ECU for 30 years.

INTERVIEWER'S COMMENTS

I have to start out by saying that this interviewing process was, indeed, enjoyable. I chose Mr. Rudolph Alexander because he was the Assistant Vice Chancellor of Student Affairs and I felt he would have a lot of memories to share as he grew up in Eastern North Carolina, attended East Carolina Teachers College, and to ~~where he is today~~. On Oct. 2, 2001, Mr. Alexander allowed me to interview him at his ~~residence~~ <sup>home</sup> in Greenville, North Carolina. He lives in a two-story, red brick house with beautiful green grass in both the front and back yards. His driveway extends from the street all the way to the side of the house. There is <sup>also</sup> a sidewalk from the driveway to the front steps of the house. I knocked on the door, Mr. Alexander let me enter his house, and there was banjo music playing. The inside of the house was very tidy and organized, there were some bright colors, and it was very relaxing. Mr. Alexander and myself sat in the living room in order to conduct the interview. There was a fireplace to my left, a television entertainment center in front of me, I sat in a winged-back chair, and Mr. Alexander was to the right in another chair. I wanted to get a life history of Mr. Rudolph Alexander, so, I started asking questions about his birthplace origins, his childhood experiences, going to the lower grade schools, making the transition to a college, his military experience, traveling, coming back to his alma mater, and his retirement.

The interview process with Mr. Rudolph Alexander was a good experience. I believe I asked some good questions and received some good remarks. It was interesting to learn of his involvement with the Performing Arts Series, in attracting top name entertainers and to provide students with a vast <sup>number</sup> amount of opportunities to grow socially. A funny part of the interview was how he got through college without paying for many of his supplies because he worked out a deal with some of the veterans. A down side to the interview was that I did not ask more questions about East Carolina University, specifically, such as some of the new buildings being constructed and other events around the campus. Listening to the tape, I need to not laugh quite as much. Personally, to me it was a little embarrassing but we had a good interview process and we were able to be professional, laugh, and have fun along the way. I can see where the laughter does get in the way of listening to the narrator. It was a great experience and, all-in-all, the interview process was very rewarding toward learning the life history of Mr. Rudolph Alexander.

good

(as I learned about)

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**INTERVIEW WITH RUDOLPH ALEXANDER**

**NARRATOR:** RUDOLPH ALEXANDER

**INTERVIEWER:** JEFF PRINCE

**PLACE:** Residence of Mr. Alexander  
Greenville, North Carolina

**NO. OF TAPES:** 1  
**LENGTH OF TAPE:** 90 Minutes

**Date:** October 2, 2001

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<b>SIDE</b>	<b>COUNTER NUMBER</b>	<b>TOPIC OF DISCUSSION</b>
1	001	Introduction Birthplace, attending East Carolina Teachers College, working at East Carolina University
1	011	Growing up as a child I..I was born in 1930 so, I am a..uh..child of the Depression Era.
1	015	Family My mother..uh..later remarried
1	020	We lived in a small community...
1	029	My mother was a teacher...
1	040	Siblings I have one sister.
1	049	There is no free lunch.

*do not transcribe these*

**SIDE COUNTER NUMBER****TOPIC OF DISCUSSION**

- 1            055            Lower grade schools  
Through about the first seven grades or so..uh..I think I can say I led my class. When I got to be about in the eighth grade, I decided that..um..making good grades and being a real good student was sort of a nerdy thing.
- 1            070            Outside activities  
I had a paper route which took at least a couple of hours a day after school. So, that kept me busy during the week but on..on the weekends we played ball.
- 1            080            The Automobile  
None of us had automobiles. Our..our parents did and ..and you..you would only get the car one time in the weekend. So, my friends...we..we would share.
- 1            090            I..I was saving some money to go to..uh..college
- 1            100            Music  
I developed a..a love for music. Being a southerner, one would think country music but I really never cared for country music.
- 1            110            EAST CAROLINA TEACHERS COLLEGE  
I came to East Carolina, really, because I didn't like a foreign language in high school. At East Carolina you can get a degree without..uh..two years of foreign language, and I said..uh..that's the place for me. Those were wonderful years. I..I loved every day of it. I think that any student...who attends...college or university and does not recognize that those are probably the greatest years of your life..that..uh..that student has made a mistake.
- 1            130            Earned Degrees  
In three years and nine months I had both a bachelor and masters degree. My undergraduate degree..(cough)..is in..um..social studies with a minor in English. Social studies included, history, political science, a little bit of economics, and primarily history and..um..a masters degree in..uh..education..uh..school administration.

**SIDE COUNTER NUMBER****TOPIC OF DISCUSSION**

- |   |     |   |
|---|-----|---|
| 1 | 150 | <p>Faculty and students</p> <p>I thought we had some excellent..uh..faculty. When..when I came to the..the student body numbered, as I recalled, maybe 1600...and it was..uh..growing very rapidly but..uh..you knew everybody on campus and..(cough).. the faculty knew you.</p> <p><i>need to mention org. College Republicans</i></p>                  |
| 1 | 180 | <p>Graduation</p> <p>I came to East Carolina beginning of winter quarter..we were on the quarter system..the beginning of winter quarter in 1949. I completed the bachelors degree in..uh..fifty-two and..uh..went through graduation exercises in..uh..in May of fifty-three. I was all finished in August of..of 1953, and was drafted in the Army.</p> |
| 1 | 200 | <p>In the Army</p> <p>I was sent to Germany. I was a member of the Army of Occupation, in Germany, from..uh..September 1954, until November 1955, when I was...sent home.</p>   |
| 1 | 215 | <p>Traveling <i>whetted</i></p> <p>It really..uh..<del>wetted</del> my appetite for travel and I have been interested in traveling ever since. To me....Australia is the most fascinating country I've ever visited.</p>  |
| 1 | 245 | <p>Going from high school to college</p> <p>When I came I was determined to do a good job. I chose all my classes in the morning hours and worked at the J.C. Penney store which was downtown.</p>  |
| 1 | 260 | <p>Attend everything</p> <p>If you attend the university and graduate in four years with all A's and if you have failed to attend the concerts, the plays, the athletic events...you may have a degree but you will not have an education.</p>  |
| 1 | 275 | <p>Living on and off campus</p> <p>I lived off campus for a couple of years. I moved into Slay Hall the second year it was in operation.</p>  |

**SIDE COUNTER NUMBER****TOPIC OF DISCUSSION**

- 1            295            Working out a deal  
Some of those guys wanted degrees but I don't think they cared too much about getting a good education. Those I would be in class with, would supply me with the ~~the~~ textbooks. ~~um~~ the ~~the~~ uh pens, pencils, paper, all my supplies if before each test I would get them down ~~to~~ my room and review my notes with them. Well, I ~~I~~ was really the beneficiary of all that because when you..when you review your notes or teach other people you learn..you learn more than they. So..um..to make this story short, I..I went through my entire ~~um~~ college ~~uh~~ days at East Carolina and I bet I didn't buy a half-dozen books. They were all supplied. These guys kept giving me books and..and everything and..um..and...and I, in part of the deal, I..I reviewed..uh..the..the class notes with..with them, they felt they had a food deal, I had a good deal and...and that's the way..um..well, it..it...it made it..uh..uh..fairly inexpensive to ~~uh~~ to attend the university when you have a deal like that. It was a good deal. They got what they wanted. I got what I wanted and everybody was happy about it.
- 1            320            Away from home  
I've never been a homesick type of..uh..person.
- 1            340            Changes of Greenville and East Carolina University  
Not only the university but Greenville..they both have changed tremendously. In the early years some serious mistakes were made. The architecture....did not blend. Chancellor Eakin came in and saw the need for campus beautification.
- 1            355            The first academic building at East Carolina
- 1            370            Retaining and improving others
- 1            415            College activities  
Dances were very important to students. We had a full athletic program. We even had boxing back then! We had some..uh..concerts.

*I don't hear  
as many "ums"  
& "uhs" as you  
did.*

*Index would be more helpful  
if it was more detailed.*

**SIDE COUNTER NUMBER****TOPIC OF DISCUSSION**

1 500

The Big Yellow House  
Old Yella.

1 510

After the Army  
Getting back to East Carolina was..uh..almost a gift from  
heaven.

1 540

Happiness at East Carolina  
Studies have shown..that people are happier in..in life  
if..uh..they really enjoy their..their jobs. Money certainly  
isn't everything.

*Start over at 1*

2

575

Employment at the university  
I was employed as uh..uh..Assistant Dean of Student  
Affairs. I was a one person staff. We had advanced as a  
department of university unions. We had moved from  
student government to a student union based programming  
organization.

2 600

The Student Union  
We formed a strong student union with  
committees..uh..responsible for..for..um..cultural activities,  
popular entertainment, films, lectures, so on and so forth. I  
don't think any student could say, here in those years, that  
there is nothing here for me.

2 620

Handling student affairs  
I..I don't think you handle students. I..I think you work  
with them.

2 650

Bringing in the big time performers

2 700

Mr. Rubenstein

2 715

Ray Charles

2 720

Duke Ellington

2 745

Performers' needs  
Some had all sorts of..um..peculiarities..you..you had to  
deal with.



<b>SIDE</b>	<b>COUNTER NUMBER</b>	<b>TOPIC OF DISCUSSION</b>
2	770	Travel adventure films I..I..I organized the travel adventure film series.
2	810	Challenges ...sought to bring to campus people who would..uh..chlallenge students to think.
2	850	Job changes I did not have the direct contact with students on committees that I had in the earlier years.
2	870	Retirement I think I knew...I knew my..uh..it was time to move on. I wanted to have some time to do...a lot of the things...that I..I really had not had the time to do.
2	900	Official retirement I retired on June 30, 1995.
2	930	Life after retirement I stay busy. My health is good. We took a cruise to Alaska. I've got five..uh..states left to visit. I..I think..uh..Colorado is..is one of the prettiest states.
2	1000	Looking back at East Carolina We just grew in..in quantity and quality
2	1030	I must truly say...AT LEAST ninety-five percent of the time I..I had a ball.
2	1045	I don't have any regrets
2	1055	Mendenhall Student Center ...this is home and we wanted the students to feel that way about the student center

**SIDE COUNTER NUMBER****TOPIC OF DISCUSSION**

2

1085

**Final Remarks**

I..I am thankful every morning, when I wake up and..and I have another day to do the things..and..I hope to learn something new every day. I hope to wear out rather than rust out.

1806 Bradford Dr. Apt. #7  
Greenville, NC 27858  
December 6, 2001

Dear Mr. Rudolph Alexander,

I apologize for the delay of this letter. I would like to personally thank you for your time in allowing me the opportunity to interview yourself. I, also, would like to thank you for sharing your stories as they contributed to a better understanding of what it was like to attend, and the events that took place, on the campus of East Carolina University. The university has changed significantly since it was established and I am thankful you have shed light on some of your experiences. I also would like to say thank you for providing students with the opportunity to broaden their horizons as they take part in the events you and, the group of students that worked with you, have brought to the university over the years. The events have opened my mind to what it truly means to earn a, complete, college education at East Carolina University. The interview that was conducted between you and myself will be placed in the university archives and available upon request. You are a true East Carolinian and have given me an even greater sense of appreciation of what it means to be a part of East Carolina. Again, I thank you very much.

Sincerely,

  
Jeff Prince