

T. Harry Williams Center for Oral History Collection

ABSTRACT

INTERVIEWEE NAME: Ralph Steetle

COLLECTION: 4700.0660

IDENTIFICATION: LSU graduate, Bachelor's Degree '34, Master's Degree in Linguistics '38; Director of Broadcasting

INTERVIEWER: Ron Ross

SERIES: University History – Distinguished Alumni

INTERVIEW DATE: May 28, 1996

FOCUS DATES: 1930s - 1980s

ABSTRACT:

Tape 955

Growing up in Cleveland, Ohio; relationship with father; early interest in theater; majoring in Engineering at Cleveland State University; driving a delivery truck in Cleveland during the Depression; decision to attend Louisiana State University; buying cigars for Bursar E. N. Jackson to get out-of-state tuition waiver and student jobs; renting a room near the School for the Deaf; discusses influence of Speech Department faculty member Hardy Smith on his life and career; getting job as first Director of Broadcasting at LSU; receiving a Rockefeller Foundation fellowship; Dean of the Graduate School Charles Pipkin; describes the work that he did while on the Rockefeller Foundation fellowship; describes seeing a television for the first time; working for the Division of Cultural Relations during World War II; rivalry between the Department of State and the Office of War; joining the U.S. Navy and working in the fleet training command; teaching sailors how to spot aircraft, detect submarines, and get gunnery out to the fleet; decision to return to LSU after the war; creating an FM radio station at LSU (WLSU); programming on WLSU (included *Music and American Life* and a farm and home tour in Cajun French); meeting with Rockefeller Foundation in the early 1950s; develops an interest in television; gets a job as executive director of the Joint Committee on Educational Television, which developed public broadcasting in the United States; convincing President Dwight Eisenhower's brother, Milton, to support public television; attempts to keep public television non-partisan; working with the Federal Communications Committee to set aside channel assignments for public television; competition between network and public television for channels; convincing universities to get involved in public television; early programming for public television; outlines travel schedule as executive director; opposition in communities to public broadcasting (charges of communism); moving to Oregon and developing the Oregon Educational Television Network

TAPES: 1 (T955)

TOTAL PLAYING TIME: 1 hour

PAGES TRANSCRIPT: 36 pages

RESTRICTIONS: None