

Title: Dr. James N. Freeman

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JOB DESCRIPTION: Head of Agricultural Department

INTERVIEWED AT: at his office

INTERVIEWED BY: Elbert Bennett

LENGTH OF SERVICE AT LINCOLN UNIVERSITY: 36 years

I was born in Kansas and went to grade school and high school there. My interest in Agriculture began in the cotton and wheat fields of Oklahoma. I got my Bachelor Degree in Science and Agriculture at the Institution of Virginia in 1923. I took one year graduate work in 1925-1926 at Iowa State College after three years of teaching at A.T. College in Greensburg, North Carolina. This was followed by three years in the department of Agriculture at B.G. College at North Carolina. I went to South Carolina State in Orangeburg as a member of their Department of Agriculture from 1929 to 1933. I then received a scholarship in General Education known as the Rockefeller Scholarship to complete work on my Masters in 1933-1934 at State College in Iowa. Instead of going back to Iowa I went to Texas. I became a sponsor in the department of Agriculture there in 1934-39. I had twenty countys to sponsor with 1,000 Negroes on the farms. Then I came to Lincoln to serve as acting head of the Agriculture Department. Since September of 1939, I have been in this department with the exception of leaves to get my Ph.D.

I rated the teachers very highly when I first came here. They were dedicated teachers. The training and development of administrative policies were of the first order to turn out good students. "Better students make a better school" became Lincoln's motto. Most of the practice came from the earlier teachers such as Case, McMillian, Tulbitts, Reeds, and others who were dedicated to their work and interested in turning out the top students in the nation. Although the offerings were little,

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the student body was four hundred in 1939. In the last 25 years it has changed. Courses in vocational training, nursing education and chemical engineering has been added.

I related to the students very easily. Most of the students in my days came from the South. I had 56 Black students in class that came from the South. In the 36 years I have been here I only had two cases of desegregation of average students that I considered serious. When a student seems out of interest in himself; I say, "Son, got a moment to come in? I'd like to confer with you a bit. Have you got a problem, son? Let's work at the problem or just go over things." They may have personal problems and I don't go too deep; but I try to give them a sentence of value. One student quit school to get married. I told him that he needed education more now then ever before but he didn't pay any attention to me and got married. He came back two years later saying, "don;t say I told you so."

I came down here with a job in the Department of Agriculture. I didn't have a Masters Degree. I worked on the job in the daytime and I worked in a bar at night because I had a family to support. I said you could do all this at the same time and still go to school. We have several married students in Agriculture with children. We give them help on the farms and keep close tabs on them.

I rate the Administration very good. I don't always agree with the Administration that to have a lot of disagreement is to have agreement. If everyone agreed with the Administration we wouldn't need it any more. The first president, when I came here, was Dr. Steges from Kansas. He knew me when I was in Texas. Since Dr. Steges could not find anyone with a Ph.D. degree in Agriculture he started in the Masters' field and I was the first one to pop up. That is how I cam to be Head of the Department of Agriculture in 1939. We had not only a professional but also a personal relationship.



We had attended the same high school; although he is older than I am. Our families were very intimate.

My disagreement about serving Lincoln, it was always had disadvantaged students but didn't know it. Students at Lincoln don't know how bad they look to the State and the people in large due to the liberty of Lincoln. That has always been a problem at Lincoln. Take dormitories; anything goes. We would lose our better students to other schools if you took that privilege away from them. What they're doing is ruining the school with the separation of people. I had just as much fun as a student as they have now but we were more respectful. We had more respect for our teachers and we didn't degrade our school or our school's name. Students today are more disruptive. They go right out and ruin the school's name. I have five girls who would have come here but for that. Student government is supposed to handle these problems but I don't think they can do it. That's not my thing but when I was in personnel I was too hard; so they put me off. They're always changing the rules.

The curriculum of the school is very good. We have no problems getting students to enter the Agriculture Department. Lincoln students do well in graduate work.

There's a lack of respect for property. Taking off telephones, clothes, door handles, etc. We have, through the years, had a mutilation problem. You can go to Iowa Harve state when the students leave and move into a clean place with nothing destroyed. Lincoln generally had no respect for anything. The library more so because the students use it.

Was there adequate facilities for Physical Education on campus?

Well, J. Hall was too small when they built it. We only had \$750,000 in construction funds. When we had games in the stadium, it was too small. You know we have the best track team in the state now?

The stadium is very adequate.

Were there security guards in your day?

There were no security guards in my day.

Was the auditorium adequate in the 1940-1950's?

No way. The trouble is the auditorium isn't being taken care of.

Was there any interaction between Lincoln University and University of Missouri?

No. No. No.

Were the science laboratories adequate at Lincoln?

They were for what we offered in terms of numbers and courses.

We had a good set up in Young Hall with Dr. Killdare in Physics, Dr.

Maxwell in Chemistry (Was the head of the department and is now deceased)

and some other very good doctors plus a student who had a Ph.D. from the

University of Chicago. Dr. Barnett Taylor was Dr. Maxwell's student and is

now Head of the Department of Chemistry at Howard University.

Did many students major in science in the 40's and 50's?

Yes.

Would you say more in science than in teacher education courses?

Teacher education courses have always had the head role.

Did you devote all your time to teaching?

No, Administration. I ended up doing more teaching until I got

Dr. Shaunery to take my place and teach "Soils in Agronomy". I then

taught part-time. There weren't too many good feelings in those early

days. I never had problems with the students. Whether or not you get

along with people depends primarily on you. If you appreciate the fact that

you're dealing with human beings; forget the fact that you've had previous

advantages; realize the fact that you are here to lift other people up,

you will get along fine.

What was the attitude of the white community toward Lincoln?

Indifferent. The only time the whites were interested in Lincoln was when they were trying to turn Lincoln into an animosity institution with the "separate but equal" law passage in 1954. While they were talking about this, the white community found out that 80% of the students money was spent right here in Jefferson City and that the dollar turned over ten times. They then came to Lincoln to meet with the faculty. In essence they said, "I'll be fair with you; we don't want to see Lincoln change its statutes, we want to stay an institution of education. If it were changed the salaries would be half of what they are today and it would hurt Jefferson City economically. So we want you to know that we don't care about you as individuals but we do care about the dollars you have; so that we will fight to keep Lincoln as an educational institute."

The enrollment of the white students started after the passage of the equal rights document in 1954. The Jefferson City School Board abolished its Junior College. Some two to three hundred rushed over here in the fall semester and added the enrollment. Otherwise they would have had to drive all the way to Missouri University.

I always got along with the white community. I've been around Oklahoma, Kansas New York and Texas and I judge by the way each one held themselves. I judged each man by the way he thought. I got in trouble once in 1933 in North Carolina because I was pushed and I pushed right back. This resulted in a 25% cut in my salary that year in North Carolina where I was making only \$18,000 a year, so I went to Texas where I got \$32,000 plus my expenses. All because I had a Masters Degree. Were the salaries comparable between Lincoln and the University of Missouri?

There was no comparison. At the University of Missouri a Ph.D. can make up to \$30,000 a year. Lincoln is more uniform in their salary scale



and pay neither the highest or lowest salary. The 1954 decision opened up more schools and increased enrollment.

Did the 1954 decision change the personality of teaching?

No, it didn't. I got a little better student and sometimes a little worse student. If they came from J. School and couldn't read; I would read it to them so they could learn Geometry, Physics, Chemistry, Biology and Mathematics.

Have you made any special contributions administrationwise?

We've increased the staff in the Department of Agriculture and increased the facilities. When I came here we only had a farm of 62 acres; now we've got bottom land of 64 acres across the river and 296 acres at Renn's Farm plus equipment, cattle, barns and very good research equipment.

Do you belong to any professional societies besides here?

Yes, I belong to the Geography University of Professors and Higher Education NEA. I have been a member of these societies since early in the 1940's. The school financed very few expenses. My highlights through the years at Lincoln have been continuous. The thing that stands out is the expansion of the Agriculture Department. When I came here there was no major in Agriculture.

The Lloyd Gaines case dealt with segregation of a law school in St. Louis which turned out good men. The president, Dr. Deffer, was a member of the law school here. The Lucille Bluford case created our Journalism Department.

All institutes are rated as first institutes. The first white students didn't cause any trouble when they first came to Lincoln. It started out that they were a lot of white students in the choir, football, and track. Depending on the individual attitude between them. The association build up by the leaders.

How did the administration feel about the first white student?

They bent over backward to them to be fair. The student leaders in 1950's had been wanting more liberation and freedom. Students in the 1960's acted for less. The damages to the student union were around \$50,000. The future of Lincoln depends on how well we adjust to Missouri's total educational pattern. Secondly, to redivide in the next 25 years. There will be fewer students here so there will be fewer teachers to teach here in the future. We have to revise our total program in the next 25 years.