

Dr. Armand J. Galfo interviewed by Angela O'Sullivan on September 27, 2002, at Swem Library's Special Collections then in Toano, VA

Transcribed by Special Collections staff, Revised by Dr. Galfo

AO This is the second interview of Dr. Galfo, on Friday, September 27 beginning at approximately 9.30am.

Pause

Dr. Galfo, you wished to talk, for the second part of the Oral History Project, about the history of the School of Education?

G Right. And, as I indicated before, when I first came here in 1958 the Department of Education was very small – only five people. That was a little bit deceiving because we did have a full-blown Masters program, and those of us who were in the Department full-time were teaching just a few courses in that program. The rest of the courses were actually being carried by our adjunct people in the schools. So we had adjuncts teaching in various places on the peninsula including the schools, and we had some of them over in the Norfolk area and in Richmond, as well as those of us who were on campus – at that time. When I first came, I was not teaching graduate students at all. I was working with the secondary school teachers and teaching one undergraduate course at various off-campus locations. The Head of the Department taught some courses at the graduate level for the Masters Degree in philosophy of Education. There were a few other professors who were teaching courses in guidance – the counseling program – but who also taught a few courses at the undergraduate level. So the Department was small on campus but eventually fairly large in terms of the number of students we had, particularly taking part-time courses at the various other locations to get their master's degree or to keep current for recertification to teach as required by the state education department.

By the time we got into the 1960s there started to be talk....When Dr. Paschall came as President, about the possibility of having a School of Education. The then-Head of the Department, Howard Holland, asked me to help him do this. Dr. Holland wanted some input from a younger person, so to speak, and at the time I was in my early thirties and the other people who were here were quite elderly. So he wanted some new ideas.

What we started doing ...was to talk about what we really wanted the program to be. We had envisaged a Doctorate in Education, but first starting with an advanced certificate of graduate work beyond the Master's

degree. But then there was the problem of what we would do with the Undergraduate program as to whether it should be in a School of Education or remain in the Arts and Sciences program of the College. Some of the older people here wanted us to have the type of School of Education that they had in many parts of the United States at the time in which the undergraduates would get a degree from the School of Education. At William and Mary, our students were receiving a degree in the Arts and Sciences – even the elementary teachers were getting a degree in the Arts and Sciences. I was very much against the whole idea of moving the undergraduates getting a degree in Education rather than Arts and Sciences. I felt that it was very, very important for prospective teachers that when they would get to their assignments as teachers, especially secondary school teachers, should have a very good grasp of their subject matter that they would be teaching. A degree in Education generally tend to an increase in education courses at the expense of courses in the Arts and Sciences. So Howard Holland and I concocted a funny kind of School of Education. We wound up with a School of Education in which the undergraduate program was still in the Arts and Sciences. Our Department at the time was part of Arts and Sciences and so our idea was to continue the undergraduate program in Arts and Sciences, and to develop the graduate program in particular for those who were going to get their masters degree and/or doctorate.

AO: That made sense.

G: Yes, it made sense to us. It didn't make too much sense to some people and there was a lot of controversy about this idea.

AO Did the debate go on for some time?

G: Yes, it did. Well, let me put it this way. We started a School of Education which was strictly a Graduate Program – it started out that way. So in the mid sixties for about two to three years it had developed. At the same time, Howard Holland had asked me to make a presentation to the Graduate School of Arts and Sciences. Although we would be a separate school, I was the representative on that Council at the time and so I made the presentation and it was accepted that way.

After one year, Howard Holland could see that his duties as a Dean were becoming overwhelming, and so he asked me to become Assistant Dean. I was Assistant Dean for a year at that time. Then something else happened. Howard Holland had an opportunity to take a leave of absence – which he thought he really needed – and to go to Lebanon to teach at the American University there.

AO: I have come across some correspondence with him when he was there.

G: Right. And, what Howard did, of course, was to get ready to go. Dr. Robert Nelson (who was a retired Superintendent of Schools from Newport News and had come to our Faculty to teach in the Graduate program – he had a doctorate in Education from Columbia - was asked to become the Acting Dean of the School of Education while Howard was away. He said he would prefer not to have an Assistant Dean. I think the reason was that he was one of the people who was against this idea of having the two programs that we had at the time, and I believe – well I know – he was an old crony of Dr. Paschall – I believe that was why they said they did not want an Assistant Dean. I believe the idea was that they would eventually bring in someone to take that position.

AO: So, that put Dr. Nelson in the driver's seat?

G: Yes, it put that faction on the faculty in the driver's seat.

I decided at the time, since Howard Holland was going to be away, I wanted to do more research on my own and it would be a good time for me to get further knowledge of research and statistics. (I had written a book at the Masters Level, in which people were introduced to the idea of critiquing research rather than doing research, and it had been quite successful. The book was based on the notion that elementary and secondary school teachers are usually consumers of research – so to speak – rather than researchers. What they need is the knowledge to sort through both the good and bad research that is often produced by the researchers in social sciences.

Do you remember the title of that book?

Yes, it was called “Interpreting Educational Research”.

At any rate, I felt that if we were going to develop a doctoral program, I would be teaching an advanced course of Statistics, so from that point of view, I felt that it would be necessary for me to go to a Think-Tank out in Oregon and work with people who were active researchers. It was a wonderful opportunity.

Under the Lyndon Johnson Administration a lot of money suddenly poured into the field of education. Lyndon Johnson had been a teacher himself – he had trained as a teacher and then gone into politics. But he had gone through a teachers' college and thought it very important to do something for education in this country.

One of the programs developed under the Johnson Administration was this idea of – how was it put? – the idea was to take professors who had been

in teaching research and give them more training, give them a better feel for educational research.

AO On the research side?

G On the research side. In other words, more emphasis.....take the people that were teaching research and get them more up-to-date in terms of the business of using statistical models, and so-forth. So what was done was that the Federal Department of Education started providing a year of post-doctoral study to make retreads out of us, so to speak! To give the people who were in the field better training, and it was a wonderful opportunity that I saw. So I had applied to go to Stanford well-known researcher there, and also to University of Oregon and also to a Think Tank in Oregon, which is called "The Teaching Research Division of the State of Oregon".

I was offered a grant at both University of Oregon and at the Think Tank. When I looked at the two programs, I knew that I was interested in the program at the Think Tank, because their emphasis was on doing research, the professors were not involved in teaching at all – they were getting grants to do all kinds of studies. Also, the head of this particular Think Tank had come from the office in Washington that had proposed this whole program. The man I would be working with was his Associate Director who had been with the RAND Group in California. It is one of the nation's top-notch Think Tanks that emphasize behavioral research - so I asked to go there. I was with the Teachers Research Group for an entire year and it really was a terrific opportunity.

AO While you were there, were you involved in a particular field of research, working with others or collaborating in writing?

G All of the above, so to speak! One of the things I got involved with was to work with a young researcher there who had received a grant to train prospective dentists to be prepared for medical emergencies that might occur while they were doing a dental procedure. It was in the medical school of Portland, Oregon. The project was to set up a training program and then evaluate it.

The other thing I had an opportunity to do was to work with a statistician to get a better notion of the use of statistical methods, particularly to understand the basis of the statistical procedures in analyzing data. With a background in science and mathematics, I had a pretty good notion about the use of statistics in research but I had not been applying the knowledge as a producer of research in education. So that was another opportunity that presented itself. Those of us who had received the grant for post-doctoral study – there were five of us in that program who came from

different parts of the country – were urged to conceive of a piece of research, send it to the Department of Education and see if we could get it funded when we came back.

One of the interesting parts of this was that I was only one that actually conceived of – in other words who came up with a viable piece of research that was then funded by the Department of Education when I first came back to William and Mary.

AOS Implemented nationwide?

G No, it was done here. The research that I proposed was to be done in the local school systems and when I came back I went into that immediately. That was probably the deciding factor in whether I would go back to Dade County in Florida and become the Administrator of the Research Programs in that school system or whether I would come back and do a piece of research myself at William and Mary. I decided that I would do that – I would come back to William and Mary.

So when I came back I thought I would stay for at least a while, do that piece of research and maybe then go elsewhere.

AOS Very interesting.

G The research that I proposed was based on a theory that had been developed by the people at Teacher Research in Oregon on the use of audio-visual equipment as a teaching tool. Supposedly, the studies that had been done up to that point were in effect saying that there was a possibility that when one presents audio-visual material it might be well to split the audio presentations from the visual presentations. The reason for the theory was based on the possibility that people were getting confused by having both audio and visual messages presented at once.

AOS That their brain couldn't cope with it?

G Yes, exactly. And that's what I proposed to test – the notion that had come from the psychologists – the possibility.... In other words that it would be better to focus on one thing at a time, as far as the brain was concerned.

AOS You are talking about the 1960's and the then-current understanding of how the brain worked?

G Yes, exactly. So I devised an experiment in which the presentations made to students would be made in three different ways: one in which the audio

portion of a slide presentation – like these slides where you have a picture and then you have the audio with it, telling you what the picture is telling you (in order to learn about some subject or other). The audio would be presented first with a blank screen with sort of a haze on it, so that children could listen to the audio portion very carefully. Then that would stop and the picture would come up, and the children would be able to look at the picture and try and relate it to what they had heard in the audio portion.

AOS So this was without the audio?

G This was without the audio – just visual. In other words, audio telling what the picture was going to be about, and then the pictures.

Another part of the study was to reverse the procedure. The picture was presented first and students had a chance for a certain length of time – the length of time was all taken into account too – and they would look at the picture, then the haze would come on and the audio would tell them – explain the picture. And then finally the regular (combined) audio-visual which is normally used.

The idea was that if the theory was correct – audio first, or vice-versa - would exceed the learning from the combined audio-visual, the normal presentation. Well, the experiment was first done in the Hampton schools. Junior high school students from all of the Hampton Junior High School, over a period of a semester, were bused to one of the schools to take part in the study.

Material was picked out that had never been covered before – that was another thing. Brand new materials. If I am remembering correctly, it was to do with a lesson in Roman History. Something that the children had not encountered and then a test was given immediately after the session to see how much they had learned, and the same thing was done with another group ...and they would come in.

It was done not with just a few groups – but with quite a number of groups in various ways. The groups that were done with audio first were tested of, the groups that were done in reverse order were tested, and there were a number of classes of all levels of ability too, which were also taken into account.

AO At the Junior High level?

G: Yes, all at the Junior High level – I think it was the Seventh Grade. So we had the entire year – I think it was the entire year or the entire semester. At any rate, each day we had kids coming in and at the end we had quite a

large number of people who had the audio first and the visual second. About an equal number of people had it in the reverse order and an equal number of people had the audio-visual treatment. So we had a very, very large sample. The sampling was extremely large – it ran in the hundreds and hundreds. It was done for quite a length of time.

When I analyzed the results I was shocked!

AO Not what you expected?

G: No, not what I expected! I expected in terms of the theory that if you separated the presentations that either one or the other – audio first and visual second, or visual first and audio second - or maybe both of them would exceed what was being learned by the people that combined the audio and visual in the regular way. That wasn't the case at all. In fact, the normal presentation groups learned significantly more than the other groups. I said "Well, gee, I don't know what to do here." And of course in a case like that it was better to repeat the study, and do it again someplace else – try another school system. Do it again. And so we did!

We asked this time for the opportunity to do it in the Newport News school system and they were very cooperative too. I think today we would have a hard time trying to get something like this done.

AO Probably.

G Very difficult to get permission to do anything – any kind of experimental studies in the schools.

We followed exactly the same procedure and for an entire semester. Again, the system bused people for us. I mean it was just wonderful. They bused the kids there from other schools, so we weren't just doing it at one school, we were doing it at all the schools in that level. It was the same level of kids – intermediate level kids.

Same thing! The same thing happened. So to make absolutely sure that there was not something wrong with the whole notion, we did it again the Williamsburg James City County schools.

Same results. So that was I thought very interesting.

AOS We all take it for granted now that this is how people learn – just thirty/forty years ago that was not the current thinking.

G Yes, there was a big emphasis on, you know, you don't want distracters. What you want to do is focus in on something – and get people focusing to

the point you are not distracting them in any way, and one of the distracters could be that they were hearing and seeing at the same time and that maybe it would be better to focus in on one receptor – the eyes – or the other receptor – the ears.

AO Which also translates to different parts of the brain working, but in fact we know now that the brain works in tandem in many ways.

G Well, I couldn't quite come to that conclusion. The conclusion I had to come to was that it could be possible that maybe if you started out very early doing it this way, it is possible that maybe the person could become trained to do this. But once you get past those very early years of life and, let's say, one learns to learn a certain way, it would be really hard to then unlearn that all of a sudden and get into another mode. So I couldn't be absolutely conclusive about it, because as I say, I was taking kids that for years had been exposed to a way of learning...the idea is that they had never been exposed to this idea of using one of their receptors and then using the other. That is something that just doesn't happen. That idea would have to be abandoned. You could take this thing to the conclusion that they would have to focus in just one way and so far... you have to be very careful when you do experiments of this type with human beings. You can take things to an extreme that won't work, and that's what I think is probably what happened.

If you had little children and you started very early in their time at school and made your presentations this way, they probably would learn better that way. They might learn better that way. I don't know. You can't come to that conclusion but it certainly didn't work

AO It didn't?

G It didn't.

AO And now in that field of learners, we now know that people do learn in different ways. You can take the general population and do research on them as a whole.

G Yes, there are pretty good indications that some people learn more readily in things they hear. But that was not what I was trying to do. You see, I was trying to find out if separating the audio and visual as a group would work. And now, as I said, they are finding out that some people are visual learners and some people are audio learners. But you see that is not what I was trying to do. I was trying to get them as a group to look at it. Probably when it was being presented it was actually defeating that idea – that some people learn this way and some people learn that way. But that was not actually the test I was making. You see my research was that,

when you make a presentation to a class, is it better to do it this way, or this way? If you have both type of learners there and then you get the results – the results tend to come out.... well, it is just better to have the audio-visual. Well, at any rate, it was an experiment.

AO This was an experiment to add to the School of Education's repertoire of teaching tools?

G Exactly like that.

AO Very Interesting.

G Well, it was very interesting especially to me as a researcher to actually be able to try something out like this in the school and to be able to get local cooperation. That was really wonderful. The product of the research went toat that time they were building.... the Johnson Administration had also funded research centers in various parts of the United States , and those research centers would take these researches and put them into files so that other researchers could get at them, and so forth. And I am not sure if those centers are still in effect, but at that time they were the places that became the repositories for educational research.

AOS I see, that is very interesting. Were they all around the country?

G Yes, there were in different parts of the country.

AO Was there one place that pulled all of that information together?

G I think eventually they would go to the Department of Education in the Federal Government. But they had these centers in various places. They were located at big universities. I think that the University of Oregon was one that became one of these centers and then there were other places.

AO So, the School of Education would draw upon the research being done ...being accumulated at those centers?

G Yes, it wasn't only for educational research. It was for psychological research too.

AO When you were looking for research on particular trends from your own School of Education, were you contacting any number of them or was there just one?

G It would depend on the particular research that you wanted, because what you could do is go into a particular computer to locate this research. You

would put these titles in or the title of the research that you were interested in.

AO So it was at that time placed on computer.....

G Yes, and would reach in any direction really. Anything that related to what you were interested in.

AO This particular research, that you did after returning from Oregon, did that cover the span of one or two years?

G Three years! I think I did it in one semester from each year. But it took quite a lot of time to get the thing organized in the different schools. There was a young man who was helping me, then got his doctorate – now he is retired. He was a black man who was from Norfolk State University – he went back there and became the Director of Student Scholarship Services, and so forth.....and he calls me every Christmas!

AO How nice that you keep in touch.

G Right.

AO During those three years you were back to your regular teaching at the College?

G Um (affirmative).

AO Was there anything you remember at that time about how the School of Education was evolving?

G Yes, when I came back they had already decided... a new Dean came in – Dean Brooks – and I was in touch with him. I had known him through Dean Holland – they were really good friends. He had been the President at Longwood College – at that time it was called Longwood College out in the western part of the State. It was an all-girls’ teaching college. I believe he was the President there, but he came here as the Dean. Dean Holland resigned - he was in Lebanon as I had earlier indicated, and came back here for one year and taught. He had also resigned the deanship here and went on to become a worker in the government’s AID Program that they had for various countries – went to Vietnam and Ethiopia. On his way home one time for his daughter’s wedding in Washington DC he was killed in an accident on the way to the airport.

AO How tragic.

G Yes, it was very sad. It was very suspicious because I talked to Howard Holland when he was back getting ready to go to Vietnam. He sort of indicated that his job would not be just in that department but he would have some sort of dealings with the CIA. When he went to Ethiopia this accident he had was very suspicious. The story I heard sounded very strange – that it was a... I don't know if he was an agent of the CIA, but he was certainly, from what I could understand, gathering information. One of his duties was to keep his eyes open.

AO Yes, well senior officials in many of these countries have these dual responsibilities.

G Every country does it. Has people who have dual responsibilities..

He had divorced his wife that he had here, and had married one of his former students – a German national. She was in Germany when that happened. I had her as a student, she was a very bright young woman. She was staying in Germany at that time and I guess he would fly back and forth to see her.

AO Where was he based?

G Addis Ababa.

AO And was that where the accident took place?

G Yes – he was on the way to the airport. That was really terrible.

But at any rate here at the School of Education it had been decided by Dean Brooks and Dr. Paschall that the way it had been set up wouldn't work. So the School of Education brought under its umbrella the undergraduate programs in elementary and secondary education, and they are like that now, except that one of the interesting things is that the reason we were fighting about this in the 'old days' as I put it, was that it was necessary for people to become teachers to emphasize the arts and sciences rather than just the education things, and what happened was what I was afraid would happen and that is we started putting more and more education courses into the programs, once it came under the umbrella of education. Now they are starting to do the opposite again.

I am talking about the undergraduate level. You see the undergraduate program was still under the Arts and Sciences when I left, and when I came back they decided it would be taken back and placed in the School of Education with a Degree in Education.

Except for the secondary .. they did leave that alone but they still started pushing more courses into those programs, and now they have started to take them out. They reduced the number of courses that people.....There was a growing trend, which was what I was afraid would happen, of having more and more education courses required and then less and less of the other thing, but I think now they have done something else.

AO You don't know now what the requirements are?

G I don't know, or keep track of that. But I know they have lowered the number of courses specially in the secondary programs, so that there is minimum emphasis is on education courses for prospective secondary teachers.

What I have always felt is that if a School offers what I call a 'genuine' degree in arts and sciences (by that I mean that the main emphasis is on having a 'broad' educational experience at the undergraduate level) and then help these people learn how to teach, especially by placing them in student-teacher programs, where a big emphasis is on actual practicing teaching and being helped to improve the way they teach, rather than just giving them courses in education *per se*, we get the better product as a teacher – especially at the elementary level but also at the secondary level too. Teachers at the elementary level need good teaching skills, but they don't get them particularly from most college-level courses. They get them from practice teaching and being mentored by good teachers. If you put the emphasis there – but also provide a broad education, they will be ready to enter their chosen profession. One problem I think that they have had is that the Arts and Sciences themselves have tended to dilute that idea of a broad education by pushing people too soon into a particular field. At the end of the sophomore year – they get pushed too far in terms of a particular field and the idea of a broad education starts to get lost.

AO You see that directly – the repercussions of doing that?

G Yes, I think so. Especially if you are going to be a teacher you see. If you are going to become a biologist or chemist – that's fine but if you are going to be teaching those courses and you are immediately being trained to be a researcher rather than a teacher, sometimes that is very difficult for them to understand why the kids can't understand what they are doing. In other words, they tend to then try to do that with their high school students or with their elementary school students – and they can't follow or understand it. A broad education can be a very good preparation for elementary and secondary school teachers.

- AO Would you advocate, in fact, choosing the last year rather than the sophomore year?
- G I think it ok at the end of the sophomore year if they still have courses that they can take in their field that keeps them a little broader, rather than becoming too specialized too soon.
- AO This probably teaches them to be better teachers. Also in the classroom with the mentor they learn the different teaching methods, child development
- G Yes, child development and psychology and this type of thing.
- AO And also what is going on in a large classroom of 20 to 25 children... you have so many different types of learners and different levels of learners, especially at the elementary level.
- G Oh, yes! And the way you really get a feel for that is by your practice teaching.

END OF TAPE 1 –

Pause

- G We were talking about the split between the people who were in the Department of Education when I first came, and later on, as it developed into a School, the reason for the problems that we were having.
- As I indicated earlier, when I first came I was very young in comparison with the people here, and the problem was probably made more difficult because two of the people here were husband and wife team, so to speak. The husband was an elderly man – I think he was quite a bit older than his wife – and had been here for quite a length of time, and his teaching methods that he was using were rather appalling, so to speak. I had become friendly with some of the people in the Arts and Sciences and I detected a sort of disdain for the Department of Education that they seemed to have, but as I became more friendly with these people they started to tell me more that I was not aware of. Some slight examples were that they would be passing the doorway where this man was teaching – using some method of teaching – and explaining to the students how to use the chalk board, how to hold the chalk, etc.! It made it very easy for me to understand why they didn't hold the department in very high esteem.

The other thing that was rather shocking was that the man's wife was one of our adjuncts and was actually teaching just about a full load at and was being paid for that at the same time as she was in the Central Office of one of the school systems nearby and neither of them had ever done any research that I could find out about. They had done what they call 'projects' at the University where they got their doctorates rather than any type of research at all.

AO You are saying that the 'wife' in this team was drawing two salaries for two places for the same time?

G Well, yes. However she was not on a full-time salary – she was on a full-time basis, let's put it that way. In other words, the salary that was being given by the College was a part-time salary because she was being paid by the class, but she had enough classes to make it a full-time load. At the same time she was holding a full-time position in the schools.

AO Did they both last very long after you came?

G Yes, quite a while – quite a while. The elderly man was practically forced to resign at 65 and she kept teaching here for some time and was gradually eased out I think by the Administration. It took a while.

AO I don't know whether you wish to add anything else?

Well, thank you very much, Dr. Galfo, for this second interview.

G Thank you.

