

*Monmouth Memories*

Monmouth Memories Oral History Interview

Date: December 3, 2015

Interviewee: Dr. Richard Veit

Interviewer/Transcriber: Caique Nascimento

Dr. Richard Veit was born in Plainfield, New Jersey in 1968, during a snowstorm. He was raised in South Plainfield and lived most of his life in New Jersey, until moving away from home for the first time when he attended Drew University for his undergraduate degree. While there, he majored in History and Anthropology. He had originally chosen to go to Drew because of their Archaeology program, but Veit failed to realize they had shut down the program just before he enrolled. Veit then went on to get his master's degree from the College of William and Mary in Williamsburg, Virginia. Then, after moving back home and working for about a year doing archaeology, Veit noticed he missed school and went on to get his PhD. After much thought Veit chose to move to west Philadelphia and get his PhD from the University of Pennsylvania.

Veit recalls growing up in South Plainfield and having an enjoyable childhood. He remembers enjoying school and describes himself as being the nerdy kid. He very much enjoyed history classes. Veit also actively participated in high school clubs and activities. Veit ran track, not because he wanted to be a sprinter, but in order to be closer to his crush, who would later become his wife. Veit also played the clarinet and sometimes bass clarinet for his high school band. Moreover, Veit partook in high school drama and worked as a stagehand. Veit recalls enjoying his duties as a stagehand, doing lighting, sound, and the sets. Veit recalls his interest for history beginning at a young age. His father was a history teacher and Veit also had two uncles who were just crazy about history.

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In preparing to attend college Veit remembers wanting to stay close to home, especially since his father was not feeling too well. Veit thus chose to attend Drew University. Veit also decided on Drew University because they had an archaeology department he was very much interested in. However, as noted above, by the time he enrolled, Drew had removed their archaeology program and Veit instead majored in History and Anthropology. His most memorable experience at Drew was when he partook in a summer field school that would eventually prompt him to work in archaeology, influencing his whole life.

At around his sophomore year at Drew University, Veit landed a job with an archaeology firm and began his career in archaeology. Although he was only digging maybe one or two days a week, as his schoolwork permitted, he would continue to work for this firm as he advanced in his education and the men he worked with would greatly influence Veit's life and career choices.

When Veit decided to get his PhD, he first attended Rutgers University but left shortly after the semester started because he did not like the program at Rutgers. Veit was then faced with the possibility of attending the University of Florida, who was giving him more financial assistance, or the University of Pennsylvania, who was giving him no financial aid the first year but had a great program director. Veit chose to attend the university with the more charismatic department director and thus his PhD endeavors began at the University of Pennsylvania. Also at this point Veit was able to get his doctorate degree in archaeology, after being disappointed with Drew in his undergraduate years.

Veit, once finishing his PhD program classes, returned home to New Jersey. He then worked again for the same firm that had already gotten used to his hectic schedule, and also worked on his dissertation. During this time, Veit was given a special project to work on for the firm because he was highly qualified due to his education. Veit was assigned a dig near Edison,

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NJ and it was at this project site that he met a group from Monmouth University as they were there participating in an archaeological field school. Veit built a close relationship with one of the Monmouth students, Frank Rizzutto. Sometime after working on this project alongside Monmouth students, the professor in charge of the field school was let go from Monmouth due to other issues and thus a position at Monmouth opened up.

Frank, Veit's good friend by now, told Veit that he should apply for the position that opened up. Veit was reluctant to apply and felt that he already had a job, he was writing a thesis, and that his life was just too busy to up and become a professor. Plus, he had no teaching experience. Frank urged Veit to apply and told him that he would be a natural because Veit was always teaching the students as they worked together during the field school. Veit then called Monmouth's history department and shared his interest for the position. He was then asked to give a lecture and so he did. Once the lecture went well Veit was offered a one-year teaching position. His yearlong teaching position here at Monmouth went very well and Veit was then hired as a full-time professor. Also at this time he completed his dissertation and earned his doctorate.

With the number of years that Dr. Veit has been at Monmouth, he is a great source for describing the changes that have occurred on campus in the past decade or so. Mostly, the University has expanded and added more buildings. Moreover, the local community of Long Branch has also grown, and the local eateries and places to go have changed. Where Veit used to go and get Indian food is now a Brazilian restaurant, for example. Overall, for Veit the most important aspect of Monmouth University is the University's community and student and faculty relationships. He is also very proud of being awarded the distinguished teacher of Monmouth University award. Dr. Veit has worked his way up in his career – from his first office in the

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basement of Wilson Hall, which was really a small bathroom closet, now he is the present chair of the History and Anthropology Department.