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Quirico Samonte, Oral History Interview, 2019

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Eastern Michigan University

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Eastern Michigan University Archives, Oral Histories

Oral History Interview with Quirico Samonte (QS)

Conducted by Historic Preservation Graduate Student Matt Jones (MJ) and Historic Preservation Graduate Student Rachel Burns (RB)

Transcribed by Matt Jones

QS: Hello?

MJ: Hi this is Matt Jones from the EMU Archives calling.

QS: Oh hello- how are you doing?

MJ: I'm good, how are you today?

QS: I'm OK.

MJ: OK. Would you mind helping me to pronounce your name correctly?

QS: First name is Quirico.

MJ: And the last name?

QS: Samonte. Let me get down your name and I would like to find out about you and your project. Your name?

MJ: My name is Matt Jones, and I am here with another graduate student, Rachel Burns.

QS: Rachel Burns. Ok.

MJ: Yes. This project is just an effort to gather people's recollections and perspective about EMU through the years and we thought there was not enough people better to do that than Emeritus Faculty.

QS: OK. OK. Who is funding or sponsoring the project?

MJ: The Eastern Michigan University Archives.

QS: OK. Any faculty advisors for this?

MJ: The only person advising us is University Archivist Alexis Braun Marks.

QS: Alexis Braun Marks. OK. Are you working on a degree or something?

MJ: Both of us are in Historic Preservation.

QS: MA right?

MJ: Yes. We are both graduate assistants working in the Archives.

QS: OK. It sounds legitimate.

MJ: It is! (Laughter)

QS: So what can I do for you?

MJ: I have a brief introduction that I will read, and then after that we will start right in with the questions.

QS: OK.

MJ: This is EMU Historic Preservation graduate student Matt Jones along with fellow HP grad student Rachel Burns. It is Thursday January 17th, 2019 and we are in Halle Library speaking on the phone with Dr. Quirico Samonte, a thirty-eight year full professor of education at EMU, serving from 1963 until his retirement in 2001. Aside from his teaching duties at EMU, Samonte served as University Coordinator for the National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education, Chief of party for the Basic Education Development Project in Yemen, and Advisor to the Ministry of Education for the Primary Curriculum Development Project in Swaziland. These are just a few of the many roles Samonte played at EMU and we hope to hit on a few more roles with you while we are talking to you.

QS: I also served as Assistant Dean of the Graduate School. That was the time when EMU was preparing for another accreditation visit and they were worried that the graduate school was not quite presentable. So I was asked then if I could serve as Acting Assistant Dean and do whatever I needed to do. We tried it and one of the things I did then was I made sure that the organization of the graduate school at the secretarial level was efficiently organized and, by that, I meant the secretaries were assigned to specific departments so they would know the people point the departments instead of just people just talking to anybody. So, I have done that and what I did to do that was, I took the secretary when I met the department, specific departments, and introduced the secretary to them so they had their faces in mind when they called. So I did that for all the departments at the University. I said "OK- now get to know the people in the departments so that when they call you, you have a face in mind and you know what they are about. Then, also, get familiar with the rules of the graduate school so that when they ask questions, you know what you're talking about. That went very well. They wanted me to stay on in that station but I missed teaching in the classroom. So I said "No I'm sorry I am going back to the class." Looking back, I wish I would have asked if I could have done both, like part-time faculty and part time administration. I enjoyed administration too, organizing and seeing that the unit was functioning well.

MJ: I have a lot of questions for you about that. I was wondering if we could back up quite a bit. If you could tell us about your early life prior to attending higher education. Where you are from, who your parents were.

QS: OK. I come from the Philippines, in the Northern part of the Philippines. My parents went to college and then my grandfather on my mother's side was a lawyer, he was one of the graduates of _____, which they called _____, during the Spanish times. So he was quite knowledgeable about civil court, which was the specialization of the Spaniards. So he was quite a good lawyer and also he served in lower government briefly. That was my grandfather on my mother's side. My grandmother on my mother's side was quite

forward-looking because she was quite an activist for women's rights way back in the 1920s you know. She was bilingual in Spanish and Tagalog which was their native tongue, but she learned very quickly. She was very active and quite unusual for her generation. She would give speeches in the town plaza on women's rights and women's suffrage. Or if there was somebody who was abused, like a person, girl, who was abused, sometimes she would help the person, that girl, because the peasants didn't know what to do or where to go for help. They were ignorant about legal procedures. Sometimes she would help present them. So that was my grandmother on my mother's side. My grandfather on my mother's side, as I said, was a lawyer, which was quite unusual. He was active in local government, so much so that he never applied for the application to run for a position- they just kept putting his name in for consideration. So he was a member of the municipal council and so on. Then, also, one of the big businesses in the Philippines, which was run by the Spaniards, something to do with the raising of tobacco. He represented that corporation from our province. He was just one of many lawyers who represented that company. So since I was the oldest grandson on that side of the family, as well as on the side of my father, I was quite close to him. I would go to the farm with him when he visited the farm in the afternoon. That was his recreation. Now on my father's side, my grandfather, he was a landlord. I don't think he went to college, but he was very active in the churches- he was one of the elders in the church. I was also close to him. So I wasn't close to my grandparents. Then of course, heading but families in the Philippines, I was close to a lot of uncles and aunts. One of the uncles that I idolized and wanted to be like him- he came to the United States and studied medicine at Loyola University. He came back to the Philippines and was active in medical practice. But then he became active in politics.

So he was one of the board members and also served as the governor, the military governors. Then he became one of the undersecretaries of health in the Philippines and then later on, he represented the Philippines as one of the Vice Presidents of the World Health Organization. So that was part of my family.

Then, I went to the University of Philippines, which is premier university in the Philippines. Where the elite would go, you know? I did well in school so I was able to go there. Then, while at the University of the Philippines, where presidents go, President Marcos and all of the others- they are all graduates of the Philippines. I was given a scholarship by the University of the Philippines to come to Michigan. That's how they built up their faculty. The government would send us. So they sent me to the University of Michigan where I earned my PhD. When I was at the University of Michigan, I also was a student assistant and then I was a lecturer before I went to Eastern Michigan University for my assignment.

MJ: Did you have any affiliations with the University of Michigan before you went?

QS: While I was at the University of the Philippines, the University of Michigan had a contract with the Philippine government. That contract was to develop an institute of public administration. The Institute of Public Administration was designed to train people who were working in government so they would have some proper knowledge of office management and so on. I was assigned as a student assistant to one of the visiting faculty. At that place. One of the visiting faculty to whom I was assigned, happened to be the chairman of the department of Sociology at the University of Michigan. Since they were resending young people overseas to build up the

qualification of the University of the Philippines, they said “I think you should go to the University of Michigan.” Originally they thought they would send me to Europe because we were sending all our young people the U.S. They were thinking of sending me to either Sweden, but they crossed that out because I didn’t speak Swedish, or the London School of Economics. Then they decided that since I was working with someone from the University of Michigan who was also a chairman of the department, why don’t I just go to the University of Michigan instead? That’s how I ended up in Michigan.

RB: Were you studying public administration at the University of the Philippines?

QS: No, I was in the Department of Sociology, which was associated with the Institute of Public Administration. So my affiliation officially then was Department of Sociology. But since my field was associated with the Public Administration, they assigned me as a student assistant to one of the visiting professors of the University of Michigan. And that was a very good program of the University because it was how they built up the qualification of the faculty. So that they paid for my transportation, my board and lodging. They paid for tuition fees, but then when I decided to stay in the United States, I felt a legal obligation to repay the University. So I called the University of the Philippines and mentioned that I had decided to stay in the US, but I wanted my relationship with the University to be honorable, and I would like to repay my obligations. So they gave me the total amount plus interest. Then, when I visited the Philippines again, I visited the University of the Philippines and they asked me “While you’re here why don’t you give some lectures?” The Dean told me that “your relationship with the University of the Philippines is an honorable one because you paid us back. There are others like you who never paid us back. So, you’re welcome back and can come back any time.”

So just to implement that, while I was in the Philippines, I gave some lectures for one term at the University of the Philippines. Just to convince myself that I was still in good legal relationships with the Philippines who had done so much for me.

MJ: Can you take us through your path to arriving at EMU?

QS: So, after I finished at University of Michigan, I was assigned as a lecturer- a path to being faculty. As a lecturer I also went to faculty conferences. So, we would go to faculty conferences in Chicago, or Syracuse and places like that. Part of going to some of these conferences is to scout around for who is hiring, because what they usually do is they put their bulletin boards in the lobby of the hotel that say “Harvard, interviewing in Room 414,” or “Cornell interviewing...” So we would go there and look. I visited a few places, and Syracuse invited me to go and give a lecture there, so they offered me a job, but unfortunately I went there to give a lecture during winter and it looked like Siberia there. I’m not going there! They gave me a chance to give a lecture and they offered me a job! I said “No, I’m sorry, I appreciate the reputation of Syracuse, but it looks too cold for me.” So I came here and then I was offered a job in California, and Chico. A Chico college. Somehow Chico College was a little too remote for me and I turned it down. The other one that attracted me very much was the University of Hawaii. I said “Well, but then I thought it was kind of far and I already had a family here. They were going to Ann Arbor schools. Then, looking around, looking around in the conferences, one of my former classmates at UoM said “Rick what are you doing here?” I said I was looking for a job. “Why don’t you come to EMU?” He was already reaching at EMU. I said “My goodness- I wouldn’t have to move!” So I

went to visit and EMU then was about 6,000 but it had...I thought, the promise of growing. It was a really respectable institution. Then, the other consideration was that I wouldn't have to move. I was already right here.

Since the program was just being developed, I had a chance to participate in the development of the program in comparative education. So, I decided then to stay and go to EMU. That's how I ended up at EMU, then while at EMU, since it was growing and then we happened to have good, encouraging administrators. It was a good place to flourish professionally. They encouraged us to initiate new courses. They encouraged us to initiate ties with other institutions. And then of course that's how I got involved in some of these things.

MJ: Who were some of these administrators?

QS: yes. The president that I remember very well was President Harold Sponberg. He was good to his office, he listened to what we were saying and was very supportive. Later on, we had President Porter, who was the superintendent of schools in Lansing for a while before he came. He was also very supportive in terms of ideas. Then of course the deans and department heads were just very supportive. The department head was Scott Westerman, who was Superintendent of Schools and was also my classmate when we were at the University of Michigan. Then, Dean Al Meyers, who used to be department head of the Department of Special Education, and of course special education at EMU is world-renown in terms of its quality. You have foreign students coming there. It used to be the department head, and they made Meyers Dean of the College of Education. So those were the people I worked with and I had wonderful colleagues. As I said, they were very receptive to ideas that were presented, and one of my ideas was exchange programs in England.

We had a department head at a meeting one time, probably 40 faculty members, and I mentioned that the University of Michigan is developing an exchange program in England with the University of Sheffield, and that they have chartered a whole plane and they are going there for a few days and I think they have three or four seats available. The department at that meeting thought that was a good idea. "Why don't you go?" just like that. Bring some faculty members with you. So I picked three other faculty members, namely Cliff Burlison, Bob Fisher, and Erma Muckenhirn. By bringing three other people we could spread out and cover more ground. Then I go to University of Michigan and there are four other passengers and they asked if we could take them. I said "Sure!" So we went and then to cover the ground efficiently in a short period of time we spread out so we could cover more ground. We picked there locations to bring back to the university for approval of the exchange program. Not just the faculty, buy we started to bring students with us. I think we had as many as 12 students we brought back from England. They did their student teaching. They were a college of education and were different than our universities. WE took them for a semester. They took courses, they were student teaching, and that came back. In return, the English students that were sent to EMU including a faculty member. That was done for a number of years. And then, aside from the semester assignments, we continued into th4e summer so that we took students to England during summer. Then I heard of another possible program on the Island of Cyprus. I wanted to explore that. I mentioned it to the University and they said "Sure! Explore it!" So we established a summer program in Cyprus which I ran. We would go there and because Cyprus was in that

part of the world close to Europe, we began to get not just students from Ypsi, but students who were teaching in the American schools in Europe. They were required to take in-service training, and they said "It's right here! Why would I have to go back to the states?" As a matter of fact some of them were my students. Then one of my students was telling me "Dr. Samonte- instead of us coming there, why don't you come here?" Then the idea of having one right there began to take form. Then, I used to, for summer programs in Cyprus, I told myself 'Well, to make it worthwhile for the students, why don't I invite other faculty members also so that we can offer different courses?' So, I would invite three other faculty members. At one time, there was one faculty member who taught the education of psychology, there was one faculty member who talked about educational research, and then I taught comparative education and also sociology of education. So we had that going for a number of years.

MJ: How long after hiring did you start developing the exchange program?

QS: Trying to recall. I don't remember the exact number of years but it was not long before I proposed the exchange program. Maybe about 4-5 years. And as I said, very fortunate that we had administrators who were very receptive to the idea. Sponberg, Meyers, as I mentioned, "Good idea Rick- pursue it!" That was a very important part of EMU, because you had administrators that were forward-looking, very supportive of the faculty members, and then willing to make arrangements like giving us release time so that we could do this and do that. And then, at one time, the graduate school was in some kind of trouble in terms of maintaining standards or providing guidance to the departments. Then I received an invitation to serve for a while as Assistant Dean of the Graduate School. That never occurred to me before, but the idea appeared to me, you know. I said "Sure!" So I was released for a couple of years. I went into the graduate school and got acquainted with the problems.

MJ: I have some questions about those problems. I know that you wrote a series of articles concerning learning barriers in higher education and I was wondering if you could describe some of those barriers that you saw here at EMU.

QS: What I did was, I prepared three volumes of reports to the accrediting agency. So it was available in the library, which would describe the different problems of the University. The accrediting agency would visit the University, you know. Then, I had to identify those again and write what the school was going to do to address them so that we would maintain our accreditation. That's what I did. There was the accreditation by NCATE (National Council of Accreditation of Teacher Education). Then, there was the accreditation of another group, I forgot the name of that, but it was a regional one. For NCATE, I prepared three volumes each one about an inch and a half thick.

MJ: Yes, we have those here- I think I was referring to an article in the Eastern Echo that you wrote.

QS: Yes- people were curious about what I was doing and they came to interview me, 'Would you tell us what the accreditation is all about and all that kind of thing.' I was glad to do it. These were some of the opportunities that EMU provided for me outside of teaching. I enjoyed teaching very much. As a matter of fact, it was the end of the semester, and I collected some of the evaluations of teachers, and when I looked at them, it inflated my ego a little bit. (Laughter)

MJ: what other classes did you help develop when you were teaching?

QS: I did mention that I helped develop Comparative Education I and II. One dealt with developing countries. And then another dealt with courses that we were invested in because of the Cold War Russian education, English education, and Chinese education. The other group was education in Africa, education in Asia and things like that. I was glad to see that graduate students were interested. And since I was also teaching an undergraduate course called "School in Society," I sprinkled my courses with materials like that, which made it richer for the students than the School in Society class we had. All in all, my teaching experience at EMU has been very positive, partly because the administrators were very encouraging in letting us innovate. Letting us propose things, and they backed us up too! One of our faculty members helped develop a program in Somaliland, you know. He had connections in Washington D.C. and he was able to get that project going and we helped develop the first college of education in Somaliland, you know. And then later on, we had a thirty million dollar project in Yemen. And then, of course I was involved in the project in Swaziland.

MJ: Can you describe that Swaziland project and what your role was?

QS: Yes. In Swaziland, our project was to help develop the primary-level of schooling. You know primary, and then intermediate, and then high school. Part of the development then, was we brought some selected teachers from Swaziland to come to EMU. Then, we sent EMU faculty to Swaziland, sometimes four of us. We would be there work with some of the principals, the advisors, we would give lectures to the teachers, and we would visit the villages and observe what they were doing so we could suggest some corrections. Then, one of the innovations that I suggested, I said, "You know, why don't we ask these teachers to come to Manzini," where we were. They would come from the villages, they didn't have efficient means of transportation. Do they walk? Do they ride a bull cart or something? Do they have the time for all that? We had, in Manzini, what they called a teacher center. We got the idea from England, because England had developed teacher centers where teachers could go for advanced professional training. They wouldn't have to go back to college. They might go back to the teacher center where they would learn how to develop a more efficient lesson plan and a more efficient teaching aid and so on. So, we copied that. They had a teacher center in the place where I was working, a town of Manzini. It occurred to me- my goodness why do we ask the teachers from the villages to come here? They don't have efficient transportation. We're taking them away from their classes and it is not very efficient. You know what occurred to me? Why don't we develop what we call a "Mobile Teacher Center?" Because the government gave us cars to use. Why don't we bring the teacher center to them and call it a Mobile Teacher Center? We had four cars so we spread out to the various parts of Swaziland. That's where we go and show the teachers how to make teaching aids, inexpensive ones, from the materials that they had. Like, how to make something out of a potato, and show how you will make a lesson out of that, you know. So we had four cars, given by the US government, we spread out to four different areas of Swaziland and did some demonstrations right there. Of course, some countries in Africa heard about that and they came to Swaziland to hear more about our mobile teaching center.

So I told them the concept. We don't want the teachers from the villages to come to town and have some teacher training, why don't we take it to them? That's the concept, I said. We had

government cars, we just put the teachers in there and sent a knowledgeable fellow to do some demonstrations and spread out across the country.

MJ: How was that project evaluated?

QS: it was evaluated informally, but the Ambassador of the United States said 'Rick, could you have a demonstration in the capital?' So we had a demonstration and he came there. He came there, we had tables set up and he was walking around, and they published it in the front page of the local papers- the Swazi Journal. The picture of the Ambassador was in there. The fact that there were people from other African countries to inquire about it was, it was a plus for the U.S. foreign aid program because it was being developed in the name of USAID.

MJ: How many teachers did you say went over from EMU?

QS: Let's see. I'll have to recount this slowly. One, there was somebody who was a specialist in reading, so that was one. Then I was there, I was helping develop the mobile teaching center. Then there was another one- a specialist in I think mathematics. And then there was another one who was a specialist in audio/visual. Since we were aware that villages could not afford projectors, screens, or films, we had to tailor things that they could develop on their own. Audio/visual materials. So that was the team that was there.

MJ: How does EMU get selected to be part of a project like that?

QS: Partly the resourcefulness of a faculty member who was very clever in going to Washington D.C. He met with people face to face. That's how we would hear about there being money for projects. So he would come back to the campus and tell us about what he found. Word of mouth and so on. "Hey- there is some money for a project like this in such and such country. Would you guys have the time and the skill to develop a proposal?" So that is how it gets done. That is how we developed a proposal in Somaliland, that's how we developed a proposal in Swaziland, that's how we developed a proposal in Yemen. And then of course, the program in England was a different one- that was a proposal at a department meeting, proposed by me.

MJ: Who was the person who was going to Washington D.C.?

QS: I think his name was Lou Poretta. He was probably a teacher in one of the lab schools of EMU. And then of course when EMU absorbed the lab schools- lab schools were where we would train teachers...we absorbed some of the faculty members to become faculty members at EMU. I think that is how they would join us.

Lou was quite what you call, an "operator." He knew people. Then he would tell us "Hey there is some money for this. If anyone has the skill to write a proposal, there was a procedure for it. There were some folks who wrote well. Then there was one who was quite good at writing proposals. I think he was part Irish, but he was a good writer. We would tell him the ideas and then give him the outline that the government wanted. We would write it, he would edit it. Sometimes, approval of these things- there is some backdoor. So then writing the proposal is just a formality. You already get some assurance. But it helped that EMU had a very good reputation as a teacher education institution. One of the best in the country.

- MJ: Would you go to Swaziland in stints or did you spend one long time there? How long were you there?
- QS: I was there two years. They give you what they call "R&R." I think two weeks' vacation with your family. I think we probably went to Europe or something like that with my family. And then, any children that still minors and so on, can also be paid for. So there is a two-week vacation. You can go to Europe, you can go to London and so on. Two weeks paid by the project.
- MJ: Does the project last after EMU's involvement in it? What happens to the mobile teaching center?
- QS: I think it continued but the local administrators had the ability and the desire to continue it. The colonial powers go to countries to establish democratic systems- you hope that people take what you gave, after you leave. Of course, you don't have any more control if a dictator takes over. Like the Philippines. The United States came there and established a democratic system of government, and by that I mean electing officials. But then they established a published a public school system, which was compulsory until fourth grade and so on, as a foundation of a democratic system of government. Once the Americans moved out, you know what happens. Crooks begin to take over and then you begin a dictatorship. So what do you do when you have a dictator? There were elections for a while in the Philippines, but then you can't control corruption after a while. It happened in Vietnam, we sacrificed something like, 20,000 lives to establish a democracy, but then once we were done, it was taken over by another government.
- MJ: The Yemen Project then- the basic Education Development Project...
- QS: I wouldn't know what happened to it.
- MJ: I have some question about it because you were an evaluator, weren't you? On that project?
- QS: Let's see. I'm trying to recall my role because I've had so many roles overseas.
- MJ: I read some reports from Yemen that you wrote. I just skimmed them. It looked like you were over there to check in on how well it was going and you found that there were some flaws in the design.
- QS: You are beginning to help me recall what I did. OK. Now I remember. We had a project there that was well-funded. And it was not going very well. It was not doing well. We wanted to salvage it to be sure that EMU would have a good name. Then also, we would be able to establish a positive relationship with the country. My job was to help mend the project because the project was not doing well. So. I went there then and then started to check what the problem was and so on. I was able then to see that there were some things to be done so that we could leave in an honorable way and also maintain the good name of Eastern Michigan. So, what I first wanted to do was, to meet face to face and establish a good relationship with my counterparts. My counterparts consisted of two people- one was one of the people working in the Ministry of Education. The other counterpart was one of the Deans of the University of Sanaa or something like that, over there, these were my two counterparts. What I needed to do was know them, I wanted to establish a good face to face relationship with them so that they could be honest with me, I could be honest with them and we could do it together that way.

So, I visited them regularly to give reports on what we were doing or give a report on things we were encountering. They liked that. They liked that. As a matter of fact, they were kidding me about, 'Dr. Samonte! Stay here! Become of the Minister of Education!' I said I was very flattered but it wasn't possible.

MJ: DID YOU at least consider it a little bit?

QS: Oh no of course not. That is a very dangerous country as you know. Everyone carried guns. Then, the driver, who was telling me, "All you have to do is pay \$50 and we will take care of somebody for you!" They were just all carrying guns. I should mention that when of course I came to the US, or go somewhere else and go back home, I didn't feel good about going back to Yemen because it was a dangerous place. I felt differently about my assignment in Swaziland because the people were nice. The setting was safe. I could look forward to going back when I went somewhere for a meeting or vacation. But Yemen, as you read in the news today, is still a hot place, you know.

MJ: Can you remember any of those problems that the program was having?

QS: OK. First, in Swaziland, I think there was the poor training of teachers. So that we had to establish a unit that could help the teachers with in-service training. That's why I mentioned to you that they came town for in-service training and I thought that was inefficient, and that's how I established the mobile teacher center. So it was a kind of in-service training. That was one aspect of it. The other aspect of it was the scarcity of materials. We had a unit in our foreign aid program which helped them develop their own materials like asking stories and developing stories out of those. The students could be familiar with their stories, not stories about kids in England or kids in the United States. We had a unit that dealt with mathematics and so on. That was partly to help teach the teachers how to make tests. How to interpret tests. So that the results can be useful in terms of them improving instruction. So there was that unit. And my unit was the developing the mobile teacher center.

MJ: Do you remember any of the problems in the Yemen Project that you noticed?

QS: One challenge was translation of materials. In Swaziland, it was established by the English so English was no problem. But in Yemen, by translating the material, I was not in a position to see if the translation was correct. That was one problem- translation of materials and so on. Then the other one was more efficient relationship between the Ministry and the villages- the schools in the villages. That required supervision and of course that was difficult to do. The terrain is mountainous. Law and order was not very well established. As a matter of fact, I do remember the Ambassador telling us foreign aid people that, if you go out on a field trip and you are within 50 miles from the capitol or the embassy, we will help look after you. But if you are beyond 50 miles, you're out of our umbrella. So, what we are telling you then is be careful about where you are going. As I sometimes tell my wife or other friends, when I would leave Yemen for some vacation or in-service training, I was kind of pleased to leave, you know. Then I would be apprehensive when I went back.

MJ: Did you ever have any tense experiences while you were there?

QS: No, because we were aware of that and we stayed inside our quarters which had a high concrete fence. It had one door for defense and there was an assignment of soldiers guarding the gate. Then, inside, where the foreign aid people lived, like (Roy) Wilbanks, myself and so on. We were protected by high walls. At night, if you did any socializing, you just attended parties within that compound. We didn't care to go out. Of course once in a while we would go out, but we had to be very careful about that. Sometimes, my employee said "Oh Dr. Samonte- we are having some special food, why don't you come?" But they would have to come and get me. So I ventured out a little but I didn't want to do that as I did in Swaziland. In Swaziland, sometimes I felt confident enough to drive by myself to go to Johannesburg, you know. There was the highway and I felt safe and so on. But still, they housed us in Swaziland in a house and compound, and there was a guard that walked around the compound at night.

MJ: Were there any, aside from the language barrier, were there any other cultural barriers that you had to cross to do your work?

QS: Swaziland, not so much because they were educated by the English. That was not a problem. Social mores and so on, we were more or less familiar with them. But in Yemen, we had to be careful because you never know when you are offending anybody. We were not very keen about attending social activities. When we would go to social activities, sometimes I had them in the office. I produced the idea of a potluck. Of course, they thought that was a good idea. They were competing with each other with what to bring. So the clerks, the drivers would bring a dish, and then they would be comparing what they brought. I was not too keen about going out at night, attending social events and those kinds of things. I asked the drivers, and they would tell me "Oh Dr. Samonte- don't worry. \$50 and we will take care of whoever you want." The Americans were just one of the competing foreign aid groups. There were the Russians, the Chinese, and of course the UNESCO, and when you walk around there you see a sign that says "This project has been contributed to by the Chinese government," that kind of thing. "This road was built by Russians." It was the Cold War. We were trying to win friends through foreign aid. But looking back, I'm thankful that I was able to participate. I wrote some books about that.

I wrote a book on developing curriculum, which I am hoping to print some additional copies.

MJ: Are there other international projects that you were involved in that you would like to talk about?

QS: When I was in the Philippines, I was in the Department of Sociology of the University of the Philippines. They were interested in the refugee project because there were some refugees, I think from the communist regime that was expanding from the north. Then since I was in the Department of Sociology and we were getting some Chinese students, they were interested in finding out about the refugee problem in Hong Kong. So, I was involved in that. We made a couple of trips to see how the refugees were being accommodated. The British consulate were helpful giving us contacts that we should see and so on. Then we also had some students from the University of Hong Kong who were at the University of the Philippines. But we didn't pursue that very much because our budget of course was limited. Number two, it was dangerous going there. So, our development was more American-oriented so when the United States helped develop the institute of Public Administration at the University of the Philippines. Many of us were connected with that and that is how we ended up at the University of Michigan.

MJ: You talk about these different places being so dangerous. How did EMU account for the danger-putting their people into dangerous places?

QS: We were not the only foreign aid people. The Americans had their embassy and so on, so it was safe for them, maybe safe for us too, we just had to mind where we are going, you know. Not going out at night. Not going out carousing with tough guys and so on. Just go right into your compound and stay there at night. We had to be careful. That's why we were put into compounds, which were guarded by soldiers. At least that was the case in Yemen. Swaziland was safer so we were all in the same housing area and then there was an old veteran that was patrolling the grounds at night, but Swaziland was safe so we did not need the soldiers. We did not need a high wall around us. UNESCO was like that in Swaziland. USAID was like that. Our house was in a neighborhood, all of us were American so we would help each other. But that was one part of this assignment. I was not too comfortable about our physical safety. Before I went there I had a student at EMU from Kenya. He heard that I was going over and he said "Dr. Samonte- please be careful. Some places overseas don't like Americans because they see them as colonial powers. So be careful. Don't associate too much."

But so we just had to be careful and so on.

MJ: I want to come back to the United States, back to when you were here at EMU. You were the Assistant Dean of the Grad School?

QS: yes. There were some standards of the accreditation problems that were going on. I was asked then to be Assistant Dean, go in and do some work because we were due for an accreditation visit and we were not in good shape. Of course I had never been a university administrator and I was going to be Assistant Dean. So I went in there. I wanted to acquaint myself with what was going on before I could propose any corrections and so on.

MJ: Do you think the problems EMU grad school was having, do you think those were common in other universities as well?

QS: it is possible. Because the other thing that compounded it –EMU had a good reputation as a school for special education- we used to get people from overseas to come to our program. And then EMU had a good reputation in teacher education. As a matter of fact, when I supervised students in in student teaching, in Willow Run or some other place they were student teaching, they would say they preferred to have our students rather than students at University of Michigan. I asked why and they said "your students seem to be more willing to work. The students at UoM, they may be in better classes or something but they can't do the things we like them to do."

MJ: Why do you think that is?

QS: I think there is some social class selectivity in those going to UoM as opposed to EMU. Some of the students at EMU are probably from working class, they are not afraid of working with their hands, and so that might be one speculation that I have. There is probably selectivity in terms of social class in terms of who goes to UoM and who goes to EMU. You probably have more working class at EMU.

RB: Who did you report to when you were the Assistant Dean of the Graduate School?

QS: Let me see. He was the Dean of the College of Business. He was also placed there like me because the Graduate Scholl was in trouble then and they wanted knew people to straighten it out. SO it was the Dean of the College of Business. I forget his name now. He was a short fellow but he was quite efficient. He knew why we were there so he was very supportive of the changes that we were making.

MJ: What year do you think that was so we can look his name up?

QS: that was so long ago.

Mj: Approximately? 70s? 80s?

QS: I think late 60s. I might have a catalog somewhere. There would be a catalog and our names would be there. He was the Dean of the Business School.

RB: Was it Roth?

QS: Roth, yeah. And then, of course, the reason they picked the fellow from the college of business is that he was supposed to be efficient in organization and so on.

MJ: You probably know more than a lot of other people, the relationship between rising enrollment and quality of education, and I think that in the late 60s and 70s when enrollment just really surged?

QS: of my goodness- it shot up. We got close to 20,000 or something. There was, of course, a correlation between our expanding public education and private education K-12, and the demand for teachers. And EMU, being recognized then as a good school for teacher training, I think that contributed to the explosion of its enrollment. But not only that. EMU of course was quite sensitive to other demands other than teacher education, so the College of Business, I think expanded too. The College of Business expanded too. So other parts of the university really quite expanded. I think it was something like close to 20,000 at some time.

MJ: In the mid-80s it hit around 25,000.

QS: It went from 5 or 6000. I'm not surprised because it was building a good reputation.

MJ: Did you see any change in the quality of education during that time? As it got bigger?

QS: There was a change also because EMU was expanding. We were in a position to select faculty members. We were more selective in the people that we were hiring. We had some good people. Some of them were invited as members of accrediting teams like myself. And then, one time when I decided I didn't want to be a part of the accrediting team anymore, they wanted me to head the accrediting team. I knew what it involved- you had to contact team members, you have to go off to team members to write their report, you have to write them properly, you have to put them together, you have to present them. I didn't want any of that. I had been a team member but I did not want to be chair of it. So, there were opportunities at EMU. Since they thought I did a good job as assistant Dean, they wanted me to stay in administration, but I enjoyed interacting with students. Undergraduate and graduate. I said 'I'm sorry but I have

difficulty turning that down.” I could see myself going beyond just Assistant Dean, you know. The administrators were getting older and they seemed to like my work. Then there was an opening that might help me stay- they were looking for an Assistant to the Vice President. I said ‘Oh my goodness maybe I’ll stay in administration.’ So I went to see the secretary who was a friend of mine, I forget her name, and asked if they were still looking for someone. Of course, I knew the vice president, who as a nice fellow. I would not have had a problem working with him.

MJ: Who was the VP?

QS: Bruce Nelson. He was a very good fellow. He used to be some kind of assistant to some general during the war. He as from the Upper Peninsula, had a good sense of humor. He relate to the faculty well, he was not sort of nose up in the air. He related with us well, joked with us. But he was efficient as an administrator. So when they were looking for an assistant to him, I thought I would stay administration. So I went to see the secretary because I knew them and asked about the job. The secretary told me “Oh don’t bother, Rick.” I said “Why not?” He said “they’re looking for a black assistant.” They were trying to be politically correct, you know. I was disappointed that they were not looking for quality, but hiring on the basis of color.

MJ: Do you know who they found?

QS: I don’t know if his name was “Goings” or something like that. He did not last very long.

MJ: did you apply for the job again?

QS: No, I was disappointed. Then I left administration and went back to teaching. I did a good job. They wanted me to stay, but I went back to teaching. One of the things I did was, and I might be repeating myself, meeting department heads in department meetings. I wanted the administrative assistant who was “Neil,” I think his name was Neil. He asked if I wanted him to bring the department heads there so I could talk to them. I said “Neil that sounds pompous. I will go to them.” What you do is ask for a department meeting because I don’t want them to come meet me like some special event. I like to be at the department meeting and listen for ten minutes or fifteen minutes, so it doesn’t look pompous. Individually, I went to each department when there was a meeting, and what was my purpose? One was to introduce myself so they see my face and what they are dealing with. The other purpose was I was going to organize the secretaries in the graduate aschool-0 I think there were 12 secretaries. What I am going to do in organizing them is ask a particular secretary to deal with a specific number of departments. The reason for that is she would be more familiar with the requirements of the program. She would be more familiar with some of the problems. She would be more familiar with the personalities of advisors and department heads. That way, the transaction would be more efficient. Whereas if we don’t organize that way and we just call any secretary, chances are they are not familiar with who you are, or your program, but this way, so that when I come, I come and meet you, I will bring a secretary so you can see her face, you can talk to her and so on. So when you call her, she is more familiar and you are familiar to her. I think the clerical assistants were more efficient after that in their relation to the departments.

MJ: So the department heads

- QS: they appreciated it because they knew the name, the face of the secretary they were dealing with.
- MJ: Do you remember any of the other faculty members that you might have taught with when you were in the classroom? Can you talk about any other notable faculty that you remember?
- QS: Some of their faculty members in the Teacher Education Department- there was Calvin Michael- he was quite an interesting fellow, fairly able fellow. Bob Robinson- he was also in Social Foundations. Boob Robinson had been so involved with the project in Somaliland. Bill Williams- he was in educational psychology. And I forgot his first name, but Labenne was his last name. And then _____, he was Indian, he was also there. I already mentioned Irma Mackinhern, I lardy mentioned Bob Robinson. There are some of the names that I remember.
- MJ: In you thirty-eight years in and around the classroom, did you notice that any ways in which students attitudes about learning were changing? Or their preparation level for college? How did student evolve over that time?
- QS: I have been trying to figure that out because it's difficult. I think that is pretty much individualized because my own experience with these students was very positive and as a matter of fact, I kept maybe part of my ego from evaluations at the end of the semester or the end of the year. I kept them. They were very good evaluations. Very positive. I don't know if it was partly because the materials were interesting for them. Number two, I listened to them and I always told them that I think sometimes I think that learning is a two-way process. That the teachers should be willing to learn from you too! Instead of just a one-way process of dispensing learning and they just collect information and regurgitate it for tests. It should be a two-way process. There should be some chemistry that the teacher can learn from the student too. Because they are from a different generation and they are going to be meting a different kind of student. That way, by it being a two-way process, your instructor will also grow. They shouldn't be lecturing you from old notes from ten or fifteen years ago. The learning process is a dynamic one, you know. I think students like that. So that in their evaluations, I was able to keep part of my ego.
- MJ: You still have them now?
- QS: Yes. They are bundled by sections. I still have a few bundles in one of my drawers here.
- MJ: You headed the EMU chapter of Amnesty International?
- QS: Oh yeah! There was an organization outside of EMU...I don't know if it came from the University of Michigan or elsewhere. Then they contacted me- they wanted me to organize an organization called Amnesty International. Of course, I was somewhat familiar with it busies I had heard about it. I said I would be glad to do that. So I tried to recruit students. I could not recruit students- they were n too busy. I tried to recruit faculty members; I couldn't do that either. So we had a few meetings with my myself, and probably ten or so students and I finally gave up because I wasn't getting anywhere. The agenda that I wanted to pursue in developing an organization was acting on the part of political prisoners in different part of the world and so on- that we could lend our voice in supporting their cause. Could we organize so that we would help

disseminate information so these people are not forgotten? But I could not get it going. There were just a handful of students there and no other faculty members. I felt bad because I heard about Amnesty International in other universities, which I felt was as good organization.

MJ: Why do you think there was a lack of interest at EMU?

QS: I think sometimes I suspected there was very little interest world politics outside of Ypsi. There was a little bit of parochialism I think. And then, being from another country probably made me more aware of problems in developing countries and so on. Yet, Amnesty International would have been a nice vehicle for protesting the imprisonment of people were unjustly accused and so on. Probably a feeble voice in matters of world politics but if we were given the opportunity to participate, then why not you know?

MJ: I am getting close to the end, but is there anything that I am leaving out that you'd like to talk about? You've had such a robust career here.

QS: I taught in the high school there (laughter). Pioneer High. The reason I taught there was they told me that "you know, if you are going to teach future teachers of Michigan and so on, what experience you have in the American schools? You went to a school in the Philippines, you went to college there, and then you end up in school here- you don't have any experience!" I thought about it and that was true! I was glad to sacrifice some time and go there and teach at Pioneer. I applied, and they said "Rick- you don't have a teacher's certificate." So I went to the University of Michigan and I talked to one of the faculty members there. "I taught at the University of Michigan and look at my evaluations." They said "Rick- you will be teaching kids. This is a difference from college students. Maybe you can handle them but they want to know that you have a certificate." Well, what do I need to get a certificate? I have two master's degrees, a PhD in education, I have taught at the University of Michigan, they said "No no no. These are KIDS. They are different! You must take a teacher's certificate as a starting point." So I went downstairs to the office and they said "Oh Rick- you do need to take a course called 'Teaching Methods in Social Studies.'" I would get a high school certificate.

So I would need three or four more courses to get my high school teacher's certificate. Plus, I will have student teaching. Student teaching?! I had been teaching for years! So I took those three courses they wanted me to take and then I had student teaching. So I had student teaching at Pioneer High. So my mentor teacher was Ivan Bayer- he was veteran from the Second World War, some of his fingers were gone, but he was so knowledgeable in geography and history that he was inspiring to listen to him. Then finally, "Rick it's your turn."

Then, he of course endorsed me, I had my certificate, and they asked me to be a full-time teacher at Pioneer High. So I took the job and when I went to see the principal, to say goodbye, he said "Rick, why don't you stay? We'll give you tenure. Tenure takes two years but we will give it to you after one year." I felt flattered and honored by I thought I wanted to go back to the University. "Why?" Well, for one thing, we are allowed to do extra work on other research projects. If I am teaching at the University, graduate courses, it's just twelve hours, or sixteen hours. They said I did a good job, "But we are giving you tenure!" No, I'm sorry, thank you I said. I remember his name- it was Nicholas Striber (Sp).

MJ: What was it like meeting Ferdinand Marcos?

QS: Well, he comes from the same province as me. I had interacted with the family even before he became president. One of the stepping stones is to become a congressman. So he ran for Congress and he used to stay at my uncles house when he visited this small town to campaign. His father, Mariano Marcos, he was a contemporary of my uncle who was a medical doctor and a graduate of Loyola. He became congressman, he became governor, and then one of the Vice Presidents of the World Health Organization. We used to go horseback riding with his father. I loved horses. He had three beautiful horses. In the afternoon we would go riding for about two hours. He would show me how to sit in the saddle correctly and how to hold the reigns- instead of up, hold them down. To have my knees against the body of the horse instead of my legs around the horse's belly (laughter). So in the afternoon we would go horseback riding. When I was given an award by the Philippine government which was handled by Marcos –and he was also a visitor of our house before he was president- one of his questions when he gave me my award was to talk to me in our dialect from the north, which is called the "Locarno." It is different from Tagalog which is the national language. He speaks both, you know. So when he gave me my award, he spoke to me in Locarno. "Oh yes, Mr. President- I remember him very well. He used to correct how I held the reigns of the horse when we went horseback riding."

So, he was a brilliant fellow. He passed the bar, was at the College of Law at the University of the Philippines. His score was one of the highest that has been achieved. Unfortunately, his administration was tainted by corruption, but sometimes, being in his position, it is hard to control all of those people under you who see opportunities of corruption, making themselves rich and so on. You take all the responsibility. You are responsible for them. His hands are probably not too clean either. Any wealthy fellow like that. But brilliant. A good speaker, a good scholar, top notch, valedictorian and so on.

MJ: We have just a few questions left- they are pretty board. What do you think your greatest contribution to EMU is?

QS: I think I fulfilled a variety of functions, which were trying to rescue situations. For example, being assigned the Graduate School- the Graduate School was having problems and they were heading for an accreditation visit, and then by going in there I had to go over some of the problems that they mentioned and see if we could correct them so that we looked presentable when they came. I was very proud of that. I think my superiors were aware of that too because they wanted me to stay in administration. But I enjoyed more interacting with students. I begged to go back to the classroom. They even said 'You can do that too but stay!' I looked back and they would have allowed me to teach one or two courses. I didnt know that then. So what I enjoyed more is teaching in class and interacting with students.

MJ: Could you talk a little about what you think are the greatest strengths and weaknesses of EMU? As a whole?

QS: I think one of the strengths I think is its teaching education program- it is so well-recognized nationally. And then because EMU is more accessible either in terms of money, in terms of admission and so on. We tend to get probably more lower-class kids compared to the University of Michigan. That is a great service to that particular social class in American society. Whereas

the University of Michigan has good programs and a good reputation, it is probably too expensive for a lot of students that we get at EMU. So I think that is one service of EMU. Number two, I think EMU has had good programs, good faculty members, so that we have been recognized. Example: We were readily accepted in our exchange program in England, you know. We did overseas programs which I initiated. The exchange program in England- I helped initiate that. Then the program in Cyprus, and then we had faculty members helping getting millions of dollars for our projects in Somali and Yemen, so much so that one of the department heads at UoM was wondering "how are you getting all of this money?!" one of the projects we had was about thirty million dollars- I think that was Yemen. Then the project in Swaziland- I don't know if that was six or seven million. Then the project in Somaliland- lots of money. We were getting that money and so UoM- the department head was wondering why we were getting all this money and they were not getting as much. We did have people who knew the inner corridors of getting money in Washington D.C.

Then we delivered on our promises. We were able to get some more. So looking back, I am pleased that I ended up at EMU compared to the alternatives that were offered when I was looking for a job. The other one was Syracuse but they invited me to give a lecture there but unfortunately they invited me during winter time. I didn't like it. It looked like Siberia. Then the other offer, which was also tempting was the University of Hawaii. I had a former student there from UoM, who was a faculty there. I was tempted by that, but somehow, my children were going to school in Ann Arbor schools, very good system. We were getting comfortable here, we liked our neighbors, and we liked this small town, Ann Arbor. So, I decided to stay. Looking back, I don't have any regrets from that time. Of course, it gave me time to write some books.

One of the articles that I wrote about the Philippines, I received a request from France. One of the academies there requested permission to translate it in French. Of courses, I said "Sure!" They never sent me a copy though. I would have been interested to see a copy then, to see if it was properly translated. But anyway, Then, they were publishing a book called "Student Activism." I read a note from him, it said, "Rick- we saw some of your articles printed in the Comparative Education Journal, and I wonder if you would write something for us in our book?" "What's the book?" I said. "It's about student activism." You know, recently, student activism throughout the world, student protesting. "Could you write something about the Philippines?" I said sure, I could give it a try. So, I wrote that, and they incorporated it so I have a book called "Student Activism." It is about, probably an inch and a half thick. Let me see- the publisher, I can give you the info for that if you want to pursue it. I could give you a copy of that.

MJ: I think we have a copy of that here.

QS: Yes it is probably in the library. "Student Activism." It is a hardcover book, published by Greenwood Press, New York. It was relapsed in Canada, New York, and London. I have my chapter here.

MJ: We will check that out. I think we are at the end here. I just want to say thank you for taking the time to talk to us.

QS: I would like to thank you for thinking that your time would be worthwhile by talking to me.

MJ: This has been absolutely worthwhile.

QS: When do you plan to have some of these things printed or...

MJ: We will transcribe this and send you a copy for correction. And as soon as you are happy with it, then we can publish it through the Archives website. You'll also be featured on the Office of the Provost's website as well.

QS: Wow. Thank you. Well at my age, it helps keep the grey matter healthy.

MJ: You have a pretty amazing memory.

QS: Thank you. Thank you.

MJ: We will talk to you as soon as we have the transcription ready.

QS: Thank you and thank you for taking the time to pursue this. Thank you.