

THS005 Jim Thomas

Track 1 [01:04:05] [Session one: 3 July 2015] Jim Thomas [JT]. BSc Economics at LSE 1960. Born 1933. First came to LSE as an evening student in 1956 [00:37]. JT describes his background and childhood and how he came to LSE [00:44]. He describes the academic route that led to him being offered a place at University College London [01:44] to do a degree in science. JT describes doing two years in the Air Force as part of National Service [02:08] and starting his studies while he was in service [02:45] and it was here that he came across a brochure for LSE [02:53]. JT describes arguing politics with his fellow servicemen [03:12] and how he wanted to learn more and so was attracted to courses at LSE [03:33]. JT was accepted in 1956 at LSE as an evening student [03:35]. JT studied for two years in the evenings and working as civil servant during the day [03:47]. JT describes what it was like studying as an LSE evening student [03:50]. JT secured a grant from the GLC (Greater London Council) so he could study full-time [4:15] and received unpaid leave from the civil service. JT graduated with a BSc in Economics [04:38] with special subject: computational methods, in June 1960 [04:42]. JT describes his first impressions of LSE, especially what it was like being an evening student [04:55]. JT describes how campus was smaller in the 1950s and specifically mentions the different buildings [05:25] and taxis driving through campus. JT describes the other evening students at LSE, most of whom were teachers [05:55] and all of them were mature students [06:34]. JT talks about the student groups he joined once he became a full time student [06:54] such as The Labour Society and the Sailing Club, but that he was not massively active in societies. JT talks about the lecturers and classes at LSE [07:30] and how disorganised the classes were in terms of structure, content and class participation [08:45]. JT explains that the classes / lectures were more directed by the students rather than the lecturers themselves [08:51], although in maths and stats, there were weekly exercises to be done on a blackboard with chalk [09:00]. JT describes graduation, which was done in conjunction with the University of London [09:25] and so took place at the Royal Albert Hall and that JT did not want to dress up and so did not attend [10:00]. JT talks about his surprise at winning the Allyn Young Prize and the Raynes Undergraduate Prize [10:19] because he had previously failed maths at A Level and did not think he was academically good. JT was surprised that he did well in exams and was nervous and so spent a considerable amount of time studying hard. [11:00]. JT, in his final year, specialised and so did five exams, all of which were in maths or statistics [12:03] and ended up being awarded a first class honours for his degree [12:09]. JT talks about the demographic of the LSE students in the '50s. [12:40] such as more men in Economics and more women in Sociology. JT talks about overseas students [13:00] and the different programmes that attracted them [13:40]. JT talks about LSE being in central London and the location problems of the School [14:00] but the high academic standards attracting students [14:10]. JT explains how he first started working at LSE [14:42] in September 1960. JT enjoyed being a student and so wanted to be an academic [15:00] and he explains about the changes to the Economics department relating to mathematics and econometrics study [15:10] and how he was involved in the process [16:00]. JT talks about how terrifying it was going from being a student to an academic in a matter of months [17:15] and he explains how he did his work at the start and that he was based in a legal chambers

[18:00] and that there was no induction or support in the beginning [18:10]. JT talks about what the students are like at LSE compared to other students he briefly taught elsewhere [19:15] and how, over time LSE students have changed and become more challenging and questioning [20:02]. JT explains about being the Economics department representative on various committees [21:08] and the Dean of Undergraduate Studies [21:50] and all the administrative work he had to do for the post. JT mentions the Registrar, Rosemary Nixon [22:20] and how valuable her support was [22:23]. JT describes how he was the Warden of Carr-Saunders Hall for 6 years and how much he enjoyed it [22:54] including an anecdote of finding spinach in a lift [23:13]. JT talks about the students and what it was like living with them [24:00]. JT talks about the pastoral care involved in the role as tutor and how it differed from being a warden [25:23]. JT talks about balancing his work as a tutor, warden and an academic including doing his research [27:00]. JT talks about how the campus has changed over the years [28:40] and space being a challenge even to this day. JT talks about the other challenges of working at LSE in the past such as lack of modern technology [30:12] and the inability to mass produce handouts without a photocopier. JT explains how the different technology was used in the past [30:20] and how you used it, including reproducing handouts and taking computer data home without the use of USB sticks [32:06], but using floppy disks instead [32:30]. JT talks about the digitisation of the library [32:50]. JT describes being involved in the AUT (Association of University Teachers, later became UCU) [33:30] and being the secretary of the SCR (Senior Common Room) [34:00] in 1962. JT talks about student and staff relations in the early '60s [34:15] and how they have changed since then [35:44]. JT mentions the student protests in the '60s [36:00] and how they changed the way faculty treated students afterwards [36:04]. JT describes students being allowed to join committees at LSE and their suggestions regarding the raising of fees and the supplying of bursaries [37:02]. JT talks about his experience of being on the Student Support Committee [37:57] in 1970s – 1980s and the financial support and the academic support that he and his colleagues helped to arrange for postgraduate students. JT talks about the changes to the Economics department over the years [40:30] and the development of the teaching of mathematics and statistics [40:50]. JT describes his positive experience of working with the administrative staff in the department [41:40] and the library staff at LSE [42:00]. JT talks about travelling abroad [43:00] and his starting salary in the '60s was £500 a year. JT describes studying and teaching abroad [44:00] in Greece and at Colombia University in New York. JT talks about being in America in the 1960s [45:00] and how it differed compared to the UK. JT describes teaching in South America [46:33] in the 1980s. JT describes his highlights of working at LSE and his biggest research achievements in the field of statistics and mathematics [48:00]. JT talks about his positive view of the future of LSE [50:20] in terms of opening new programmes and institutes and interdisciplinary study and research. JT talks about the concerns in creating professional-style degrees and management courses [52:40] but how they have been very successful. JT talks about the rise in tuition fees and the changes to education [55:00] and the changes to measuring the impact of research [57:00]. JT talks about the large increase in postgraduate students and overseas students at LSE [59:00] and that there is more support for students from the School now compared to the past [01:00]. JT talks about the positive impact of the internet of study and research [01:01:09]. JT talks about supervising an MSc student when he was technically still a student [01:03:20].