



Lawrence Goodridge

B.Sc. 1995, M.Sc. 1997, PhD 2002

Interviewed by Emma Gartlan

What year did you start at the OAC or was it called the University of Guelph at that time?

I'm not that old, I started in 1990.

How long was your program? I read that you did microbiology.

I did all 3 degrees in microbiology. I completed my PhD in food science in 2002.

Did you always live in Guelph, or did you move here for school?

I moved here. I'm originally from Hamilton.

What high school did you attend in Hamilton?

I use the term Hamilton rather loosely. I'm from a small town called Copetown. Copetown is a very small place that's kind of beside Ancaster, but closer to Guelph and another small town called Dundas. If you took the bus to Hamilton, I'm assuming you went down Highway 6 and you go down a big hill to get there. And so that's called the valley and Dundas is right in the valley. I went to a high school called Dundas Highland.

Was it a big high school or would you call it rather small?

About 1000 people.

What made you decide to go to the University of Guelph over any other schools that you might have applied to?

At the time, there was a grade 13. They subsequently did away with that. In grade 13, I took a biology class, and the teacher was teaching us about microbiology. I became interested in microbiology. People would come from different universities to introduce

the university to senior students. Right around that time some people came from Guelph, and they told us that they had a very strong microbiology program, one of the strongest in the country. I was also very impressed with the people who came. Very personable people and it seemed like a really fun place as opposed to some of the other places like McMaster and Western where the people were more serious. My parents wanted me to go to McMaster. They both work for McMaster. But I also didn't want to live at home.

I wanted to move away from home too. I'm from Peterborough, so really far from here in comparison to a lot of people. I thought about going to Waterloo, but I'm happy I didn't. It was far from home, which was nice. Did you do any tours before you chose to attend here?

I believe I did.

Did you have any family members who had connections to the school?

No, I was the first person in my immediate family to go to university. My parents are originally from South Africa, and they immigrated to England and Canada. They went to colleges in the UK, but not the university and certainly not, universities in Canada. So, there is no connection. I'm the first one here. Do you like it here?

I do. The campus is great. The food's great.

Yes, exactly. I've heard that Guelph has the best food in all of Canada and that was the same back then. I don't know if it's the same now, but they had these meal cards that were like credit cards, and you could put points on it. You could go anywhere on campus. There were a lot of options off campus too.

Do you remember any professors? And if you do, do you stay in contact with them because you still work at Guelph?

I've come back as a professor, but there are still professors who taught me. Most of them are retired but I keep in touch with them. My master's and PhD supervisor, his name is Dr. Mansel Griffiths, and I keep in touch with him. He's retired, but I keep in touch. One thing I liked about Guelph is how people are personable. You might not find that at larger schools. People are collaborative and generally care about your well-being.

Did you have a favourite class?

The first one that comes to mind is in the introductory microbiology class. It was taught by Phil Sweeney, and he made the class fun. He didn't just come in and say, "Here's the material." He was a bit of an entertainer and for a freshman, I think that was pretty good.

So, you didn't commute?

No, I lived in South Residence. I was in South and Maritime for my whole 4 years. It was like why not? I don't have to cook. I got my own room for all four years, and I never had a roommate.

I lived in South as well. I was in Prairie. I understand the desire to stay on campus. You have all the resources, and you don't have to cook, which is nice. But I don't know if I would want to live around the first years while I was in my upper years. Maybe you didn't have to interact with them too much.

That's interesting. I'm trying to think back, there wasn't a case where I thought "My goodness, I'm really old and they're young." There were a couple of people who lived in Maritime that were grad students or they were mature students. I never remember thinking "Man, you're old." Back then it wasn't as it is now where it's only first years in residence. There were people who lived on campus for multiple years.

So, it was kind of the norm in comparison to the norm now. Did you think about becoming a Residence Assistant?

I may have applied a couple of times. But I never got it.

Were you involved in any extracurriculars on campus?

I liked sports a lot, so I played soccer, I tried out for the university team in my first year, but I didn't make it. Then after that, intramural sports. I was involved in a theatrical play, but I can't tell you any more details about that. It was put on every year in War Memorial Hall.

I guess they do musicals now. Did you do a musical or are you a singer?

It was a musical. I can't remember who organized it and I can't remember how I would have gotten in, but it was fun.

Were you on stage?

I was on stage.

I'm going to have to do some research then that's interesting.

It was fun. I didn't have a big part.

If you could compare to what you observe now, is social life on campus a little different than what you experienced when you were at the University of Guelph?

I don't come on campus for social activities anymore. The social life is another reason I chose Guelph, which had this reputation of being a party school. Things have changed like the Brass Taps used to be called the Keg. They used to have a DJ in there and it's not like now where there are pool tables. Right when you came through the front door on the right side there was a DJ booth, and it was just so much fun. On Thursday night we would try to get in. There would be a long line up in the courtyard and then at about 11:30, everybody would go to the Bull Ring, which used to be a bar or a dance club. At the Keg, they played alternative music and pop rock type stuff. The Bull Ring was all about dance music and hip hop. It was so much fun.

That's a nice transition. You go to the UC which is not even that far away from the Bull Ring.

Especially if you live in South. Do you know where the Delta is? So, there's that strip, mall just down the road, on Gordon. There used to be a bar in there called the Animal House. Now it's the Shakespeare Arms. That used to be a pretty big party place as well.

That sounds way more party-esque than Shakespeare.

That's what I mean when I say things that will change. I'm assuming there are still parties in the dorms. I mean there used to be crazy, crazy, crazy parties, in Johnston Hall and Mills.

Funny enough, the parties didn't touch Mills. I was kind of far away from that and I never had a reason to go there, but I remember orientation week they would have these big groups of people outside of Johnston. It wasn't even inside. It was just at the doors. I was lucky enough not to live in Johnston. But some people would try to just get to into their place and they couldn't get there because there's so many students. I'm curious as to why it migrated to the outside of the building.

I don't know. It was always on the inside when I was there.

What did you do for fun and relaxation?

The parties were fun. I watched the football team and the basketball team. At the time, they were really good. Like nationally good. They almost won national championships. There were lots of people who would go. I went to music concerts with friends. I went home a lot and on the weekends. I was close to my family, with my parents. So, between all that I kept myself busy.

Did you feel like you were part of the University of Guelph? And did you do any traditions such as painting the cannon perhaps?

I never painted the cannon. But it felt like I was part of it, the Guelph community. I loved it. This is why I wanted to come back after I left. I spent 16-17 years trying to get back here because I loved it so much.

You did food science. This year, the food science undergrads did this project where they made hot sauce. Did you participate in anything similar to that when you were here?

When I was there, the processing facilities were not part of the University of Guelph. There was another company called the Guelph Food Technology Centre. They would do projects with food companies. Let's say, your mom or dad or whoever had this recipe

at home for cookies, and you say to them, man, these cookies are good. You should think about commercializing this. It's not as easy as just multiplying it. If you want to make 10,000 cookies, multiplying all the ingredients by 10,000, it doesn't work like that, right? So, your mom or dad would go to them and say "Look, I want to scale up this homemade recipe." So, they had the equipment and everything to do it and they would also help with the business plan. Then at some point after I left, the Food Science Department got those facilities. This whole hot sauce thing only started since I've come back. It's only been three or four years.

Are you a fan of hot sauce?

Yes, I have my 90-year-old aunt and she likes it because I got her some and she keeps asking for it. My pet peeve is, they only make a little bit, and it runs out quickly. It's very hard to get.

Do you still keep in contact with friends you made along the way?

Absolutely. Especially friends from my undergraduate. There's a group of four of us, plus myself, so five, and we try to get together every 4-5 years as a group, although we haven't done it lately because of COVID. Some lived in BC and Hawaii. I lived in Wyoming, so we've all had get-togethers there. Before I came here, I was in Quebec, so we've all had get-togethers and it's been great. We all still keep in touch and are good friends. Other friends are not part of that, but I also still keep in touch with others, mainly from my undergrad. Not so many from my graduate days.

You don't have to answer if you're not comfortable, but did you have any tough times that you went through during school and if so, how did you combat those?

During my PhD, my mom died of breast cancer.

I'm sorry.

Almost the whole time she kept going into remission and coming back out of remission. She died around the year 2000. One reason why I keep in touch with my master's and PhD supervisor is because he was really kind to me. The understanding and resources that we have today on campus for mental health weren't there. I'm sure there were some resources, but it wasn't like today. So, he helped me and was very kind and supportive. That was a tough time because the PhD was very difficult. Then my project wasn't going well and then I had to deal with that.

Do you have photos that you would like to share with your experience here? If not, you don't have to.

I don't know if I have any. I wasn't the type of person that took pictures. I've never been one of these people. I was never one of those people who do the yearbook thing. Even in high school I never got a yearbook. Never saw reasons to but now I do. I can check and see if I have anything but off the top of my mind, I don't think I do.

I did a little research on you beforehand, so don't be weirded out (laughter), but it was recommended, and I got on LinkedIn, and I dove deep and it says that you went to the University of Georgia. Was that immediately after your PhD at Guelph?

Yes. For a postdoctoral fellowship.

You do a lot of things like pathogens and stuff.... I'm assuming that stems from microbiology?

My research is in the area of foodborne pathogens. Like E. coli and salmonella and things like that. How they contaminate food, and how we can control them and kill them, especially on fruits and vegetables. Because with meat, if you cook your meat, it will kill them. But if we don't cook our fruits and vegetables, so if they're contaminated, what do you do? And the answer is as of right now, not much you can do. So, we're trying to figure out different approaches, trying to understand what it is about the pathogens that make us sick because that can also lead to approaches to control them. We also want to figure out how to detect outbreaks faster, so that we can get the contaminated food out of the grocery store and stop the outbreaks. One way to do that is to do what's called wastewater-based surveillance. These are all the pathogens that cause gastroenteritis and diarrhoea. If you look at wastewater - that is sewage, raw sewage, you should be able to find them. In the City of Guelph, we would go to the wastewater treatment plant, we take samples, and we look to see if these bacteria are present, they're always present at a low level. We're looking to see if there are any spikes and if there are, that might indicate that there's an outbreak. And so, during the pandemic, that same approach was used for COVID-19. My lab is part of a provincial group. The group conducts surveillance of wastewater for COVID-19 around the entire province. So that's become a major part of my research as well.

Yeah, that's interesting. Is there anything else that you'd like to share about your experience?

It was life changing. I love the university. I'm passionate and I'm proud of it. I've worked at universities in the US and elsewhere in Canada, and I always wanted to come back to Guelph. I was able to do that in 2019 and it's been everything that I thought it would

be. The OAC, specifically, has a special place in my heart. Of my 12 years at Guelph, I spent over 7 at OAC. The OAC is a very famous and world-renowned college, and I know next year is its 150th anniversary and I'm looking forward to celebrating along with others.

I didn't even know they existed when I first applied. I'm in mechanical engineering and I'm doing a minor in history, so that's why I'm taking this course. But my one friend is doing environmental science so she's getting more involved in the OAC. I'm gaining more information on this place that I never knew existed, but I can see the impact for sure. Like how it changed your life a lot. It's changing my friends presently. I didn't realize it was such a big part of the school. I almost want to say the university is the smaller part and the OAC is that giant part that's always been around.

OVC and the OAC were the foundation for forming the university. The university is only about 60 years old. I believe. Both of those colleges have been around for almost three times as long.

Thank you so much for meeting with me.

You're welcome.