

Voices of the 250th Interview with John McQuarrie,

06-18-2026

The following oral history is the result of a recorded interview with John McQuarrie and Cliff Robinson conducted on June 18, 2026. The interview took place at Dohm Alley in Princeton, NJ as part of the Voices of Princeton Project.

Readers are asked to bear in mind that they are reading a transcript of the spoken word, rather than written prose.

TRANSCRIPT

Cliff Robinson: [00:00:00] My name is Cliff Robinson. Could you please state your name?

John McQuarrie: [00:00:03] John McQuarrie.

Cliff Robinson: [00:00:05] John, how did you come to Princeton, and how long have you been here?

John McQuarrie: [00:00:08] We moved to Lawrenceville thirty-seven years ago, and so we use Princeton, you know, quite often.

Cliff Robinson: [00:00:18] Sure. Yeah, regular visitor. I understand. Yeah. So, coming to our questions about the 250th, what does the 250th anniversary of the United States mean to you personally? Does it feel like a significant milestone? Why or why not? What would make it more meaningful for you?

John McQuarrie: [00:00:34] What does it mean to me personally? I was a lawyer in Princeton and switched careers to become a history and government teacher at a school nearby in high school, and so having taught history, 250 years does not seem like a lot when you talk about world history. But 250 years of a democracy is significant, and so I personally see the 250th anniversary as a real significant milestone. Just because democracies have not lasted that long.

Cliff Robinson: [00:01:28] So, as you imagine the country changing over the next 50 years, what kind of political future do you hope for? What concerns you when you think about the ideals of 1776? How do they show up or not in politics today?

John McQuarrie: [00:01:42] I am concerned because, as I used to teach history, there's a real question as to whether you can call the United States of America a nation. Nations tend to be people of common history, common ancestry, common culture, and we're not. What we have are common values, and that's what has always united us as a country. Things like equality, and freedom, and liberty to live as you want to live. Those are the things that combine everybody that comes here. I mean, you come from anywhere in the world, you're coming here because you share those values. My sense today is that those values are eroding. That if we don't share those values, I'm not sure how we're a country, and I'm not sure how we can continue to maintain the country as we've known it for 250 years.

Cliff Robinson: [00:02:46] Okay, great. Is there anything else that we haven't talked about, but you wish to include in your interview? Are there stories about Princeton's past, for example, which you feel aren't well known enough?

John McQuarrie: [00:02:56] I think it should be better known that Princeton lost to Rutgers in the first college football game. As Rutgers graduates here, I think there should be more of a commemoration of that.

Cliff Robinson: [00:03:10] Perfect. Thank you so much.

[END OF INTERVIEW]