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Brubaker, Bruce - Oral History Interview

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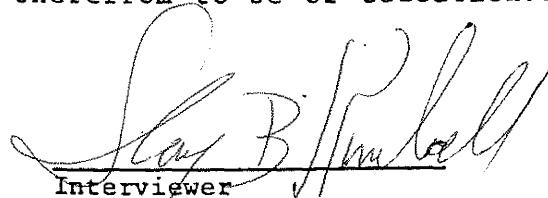
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ORAL HISTORY

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Interviewer

Address:

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Date:

6/5/92


Interviewee

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Date:

6-5-92

Date of Accession: _____

SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summers 1990-92

Bruce Brubaker Interview, June 5, 1992

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: BRUBAKER.605

Q: Professor Bruce Brubaker, School of Education, one time Assistant to the Vice President for Operations. Thanks so much for dropping by to share some of your memories. Bruce, why did you come here in the first place.

A: Number one, I was invited to come by Dr. Harold See, who was then Operational Vice President. We had known each other in graduate school. Number two, professional advancement. Number three, to upgrade my income.

Q: So where did you come from, Bruce?

A: I came from the University of Mississippi. Yes I came from Ole Miss, where I had been Professor of Education. I had the rank of full professor in education. I was at Ole Miss for seven and a half years. Not only did I teach in the School of Education, but I was Director of the University High School.

Q: Now how did See learn of you way down there?

A: Harold See and I had kept in touch having known each other in graduate school. We even shared the same office in graduate school.

Q: Where was that?

A: Indiana University.

Q: You retired in 1985. You came here when?

A: December of 1959. Started December 1st.

Q: 1959, that's - what would that be ?

A: 25 1/2 years. I retired as Professor Emeritus from the School of Education in the Education Administration , now the Leadership Department.

Q: Bruce, why did you stay here so long?

A: I was very satisfied to work in this institution because it was a growing institution. The only direction to go was up. I found it a very satisfying position . From 1972 until I retired in 1985, I taught full time. During that time I was chairman of the department two different times. You see I was having a very satisfying and satisfactory career. Also, my wife was teaching in the Edwardsville School District and was organist at St. John's United Methodist Church in Edwardsville. Yes, it made sense to stay at SIUE.

Q: I ask everybody this question, you're about the 48th or 49th person. I'm happy to say that the answers are usually upbeat, good working conditions, good colleagues, good pay, pleasant place, opportunity to pioneer and explore. You were in administration and teaching, at the same time or at different times?

A: From the beginning, I held Professor rank in the School of Education and the Education Administration Department. So from the beginning, I did some teaching each year, even when I was assistant to the vice president, I taught two or three classes during a year. After I'd been assistant, I need to correct that, after I'd been assistant to the vice-president for one year I became assistant to President Morris for a year--my title was Assistant to the President. In that case it was Clarence Stevens. I remained in that position until 1965 when I became head of Extension Services with the title of Assistant Dean of Extension. The dean being in Carbondale--Dean Raymond Dey. A very fine man. In 1972 I went back to full time teaching.

Q: Bruce, what do you consider your most significant contributions to SIUE?

A: Number one was directing and conducting the University bond issue campaign in 1960. Hence, this campus. That was the famous "building the war chest" as we called it.

Q: You assigned me to Green County.

A: A green professor to Green County.

Q: Well said. I know you kept a scrapbook and I know we got the appropriations, our "war chest" as we called it, and then built this campus. Any other ones?

A: Number two, teaching Education Administration. I have had a great deal of satisfaction of teaching Education Administration, because we were preparing students for the superintendancy and principalship. I hope I had an impact on the professional lives of those who went through the classes, because many of them are area school administrators now.

Q: Have you kept up with many of your graduates that are out in the area?

A: I would say yes. There are many of them that I see in professional organizations. I am a member of Phi Delta Kappa, which is a professional education fraternity and I was active in the Superintendents Forum (one year president) and the Illinois Principal Association (advisor four years). Also, before I retired, for the last six or eight years, I was District Director of the North Central Association of Colleges and Secondary Schools. Then I was in touch with a lot of our former students and area administrators. That continued association and seeing those people has dropped off in the last four or five years since I retired, but I still see some of them at Phi Delta Kappa and other professional meetings.

Q: So we're talking about principals, superintendents -

A: Curriculum Coordinators, Public Relations Directors, and so on in the public schools.

Q: Any other significant contributions that you feel very good about?

A: I guess those were the two main ones. One would be the passing of the bond issue of \$195 million. First, because the bond issue passed, and second because Madison County (followed by Macoupin County) was the southern most county in the state in which the bond issue passed by the required majority; the other successful counties were in the Chicago, none in between.

Another satisfaction is that as a Professor of Educational Administration I had the opportunity to assist in preparing administrators for the public schools. I really feel I had some impact on many students who later became school principals.

My great interest is in the school principalship. I emphasize a great deal the behavior of the school principal, because s/he is the person who has to model behavior in his school. He has to set the tone for others at the school, establish the climate for hundreds of students.

Q: Your greatest frustrations here?

A: I was head of Extension Services seven years. Well, John Rendleman got to thinking we could be a little more economical if we eliminated certain things and certain programs. And so in 1964-64 he decided to eliminate Extension Services. That's very unusual, because every university I know has an extension program. Also, the Technical and Adult Education program, headed by Emory Casstevens and assisted by Dale Blount was eliminated. Well, within a year, it was reported to me that in his meetings with other academic personnel that he said, "What happened to our credit hour production? Our credit hours has gone down." And somebody spoke up and said, "Well you eliminated extension." And that was thousands of hours that were lost by eliminating Extension Services. So then, after that extension and continuing education were reorganized and reinstituted. I felt that I should have made a greater effort than I did to try to change Rendleman's mind, but I didn't make any great effort and so he had implemented that change.

Q: I interviewed Dale Blount, and your interview will go into the archives along with Dale's, and he said much the same thing. He was very critical of the elimination of this extension program. According to him, nobody else picked them up, and they just disappeared, and it was a great loss to the community and to the university. Any other frustrations?

A: This is minor. The usual internal politics were sometimes frustrating. Fortunately, I didn't have any great difficulties, but there often was internal political action taking place, which is kind of disgusting and discouraging. But, I don't feel that I was ever hurt by any of it.

Q: Best memories?

A: When I read this I first thought of incidents that took place during the bond issue campaign.

Q: Let's hear them.

A: Number one, the shooting at the helicopter by one of our neighbors. And that neighbor, his house was right near where we were sitting too, at the time. You recall that we had a big rally on campus, well, over on the grounds where security is now. As one of the things to attract people, we had a helicopter giving people free rides and after two or three flights over the site, the farmer became very unhappy because the helicopter was scaring his horses in the corral and so he took a gun and shot at the helicopter. Dale Blount was on that helicopter when it was shot. They heard the shot hit the propeller.

Q: Dale Blount and Bill Shaw.

A: That's right. That was one amusing incident. Another--early commencements. In 1960 we held our commencement out in the open field just adjacent to Rt. 157 out near the entrance to the campus. Governor Stratton was the speaker and the commencement was taking place just at dusk and once in a while we could hear birds in the distance singing and Governor Stratton interrupted his speech, paused and said "Hear that killdear? Hear that killdear?" and everybody listened and you could hear the killdear "Killdear! Killdear!" I'll never forget that. Here the governor of the state knew what a Killdear was and he called the people's attention to it.

Another memory was that Mr. Casstevens and I in those very early days in 1960 and 1961, we had learned where the asparagus beds were, the strawberry patches, the raspberry patches, the fruit trees were, and we took advantages of those. Oh, the farms that had been abandoned. On the farms from which the previous owners had moved and so that was one great memory.

Q: Now that story I've never heard. That's a great one.

A: Next to the security building where we then had the vice-president's office were two apricot trees and one Friday evening when I went home, I thought, "I'm going to come back and pick apricots on Sunday." On Sunday I came back, and somebody had picked that apricot tree bare. There was no fruit on it.

One other memory is that, I'll come back to the bond issue campaign, was the run by students, from each university campus to Chicago to call attention to the public of the bond issue that was coming up, the referendum coming up. You remember that I'm sure.

Q: A little bit, yes.

A: Well in the archives is a big photograph of Dr. Harold See and myself and one of the runners holding the torch that was to go to Chicago. Dr. Harold See and I went to Chicago to be there when they arrived. I recall meeting and talking to Mayor Daley.

Q: Worst memories?

A: I don't think I have any. If we talked for a while, I might have.

You don't want such memories as knocking the trim off the side of a University car do you?

Q: Well, why not?

A: One day I was driving to the architect's office which was over on the west side of the campus and I sideswiped a tree and knocked the strip off the side of the car. That was frustrating.

Another bad memory is that during the years since I came to SIUE in 1959, five of my colleagues in the Ed. Dept. have died.

Q: As an administrator and a teacher I would suspect you had much to do with relating the University to the community, to this area. Would you please comment on that aspect of your career here. Community service, perhaps, something like that.

A: I'll do that, but we'll need to come back to humorous experiences. I didn't give one that's very important. As assistant to the vice-president under Clarence Stevens, that would be from 1962 to 1965, I was the Campus Coordinator at Alton, and I had many problems because of the great number of students at such a small campus. In 1964-65 we had 5,000 plus students on the Alton campus. One of the problems was the parking problem. Mr. and Mrs. Hershey lived across the street. Mrs. Hershey was a member, at the time, of the State Board of Higher Education. One day her daughter came running into our office on Leverett at 11:50 a.m. demanding that I remove that car parked in their driveway, because her father was due in ten minutes for lunch and he would be very angry. That's the incident that I had forgotten about.

Q: Let's pick up on your activities in relating the University to the community, as a teacher as an administrator.

A: Well, of course I was related to the immediate community and to the larger community in directing the bond issue campaign. Not only was I involved, but also the professors who served on that campaign committee to conduct the campaign in nine surrounding counties. They gave many speeches and I gave many speeches, so yes in that event I related a great deal.

Then from 1965-1972, I was head of extension services and of course I saw that programs of education were made available in many communities as far north as Litchfield and as far south as Nashville.

Then, as district director of North Central Association in later years, up until I retired in 1985, maybe the last five or six years, I was responsible for seeing that evaluation teams were established to evaluate high schools as their periodic evaluations came up. So to that extent, I related to the educational community.

Then I was active in the Southwestern Illinois Superintendents Forum. I went through the ranks as an officer, first as treasurer, then as secretary, and then vice-president, and then president.

I was also active in the Illinois Principals Association and the last three or four years or five I was the so-called professional advisor to the regional Illinois Principals Association. So, you see, I was involved.

Q: Would you tell us about some of the many committees you served on and studies you drafted and advising See and advising Morris. My understanding is that you had far more to do with the establishment of the early campus, beyond the bond issue.

A: Well, in as much as I was assistant to the vice-president and the president I was given the responsibility of serving as coordinator of the campus planning and as fiscal officer. As fiscal officer I was responsible for keeping track of the \$50,000 grant from the Educational Service Laboratories of the Ford Foundation.

Q: When \$50,000 meant something.

A: Yes. \$50,000 was a lot of money then. As fiscal officer, I had responsibility for travel, of the members of that committee that traveled from one campus to another or traveled between campuses. Later on I was chairman of, I'm not sure of the exact title anymore, but the area coordinating committee that involved the area Chambers of Commerce, the Zoning Boards, and those kinds of people. That committee was giving attention to area relationandor relations of the university, to the Edwardsville community in particular.

Q: Well, as I understand this and hear you, you played a very important role in getting this university established and helping guide the initial set up. There's one thing, the EPEC, what was that?

A: That was a part of the total planning of this campus: Geographical planning, building planning, program planning, and curriculum planning; all had to be done. The planning committees and President Morris decided that we would like to bring in consultants to talk to the university community in order to help prepare members of these committees in particular for their overall planning for this campus. And so EPEC stands for Environmental Planning, I'm not sure.

A: EPEC was that special event that we held in East St. Louis and rented an air inflated circular building in which we held this event. We had 360 degrees of video productions going on at one time within this environment.

You were asking about things that I have done and been involved in and community relations. One thing that I haven't even noted ,but now I think of and means a lot to me, was that I worked closely with President Morris in establishing the University Religious Center. We contacted the heads of the various church jurisdictions and invited them to meet with us to talk about, and to reach decisions about what we should do about religion on this campus.

As a result we have the religious center; the building was designed by R. Buckminster Fuller. He utilized his geodesic dome in the design of the building. It should be noted that the building stands astride the 90th meridian. I, for years then, was the University representative to the Religious Council which was made up of representatives of those seven church jurisdictions.

Q: Well, now your the first that's ever mentioned this. That, of course, is part of your community service in relating the University to the community.

A: That's right.

Q: That religious center, a very important dimension of campus life. Do you remember the beginning of the movement? Did you go to the community or did the community come to us, or did the churches come to us?

A: I believe, initially, President Morris and maybe President Morris and I went to the churches to consult them to determine their interest, and then we held meetings and decisions were made. One

question, extensively discussed, was should each religion have, or each church, have its own offices, or separate buildings? Should there be one building in which all of those churches would participate? The latter was the decision made, and hence we have the University Religious Center.

Now, that doesn't mean that all religious activities or all religious groups participate, that all religious groups that participate on campus are housed in that building, but most are. It started out with seven denominations, I believe.

Q: I think that many students groups are of course permitted to use the building for various religious activities. I know there are marriages and memorial services, all kinds of appropriate activities.

A: Counseling. Also the building and its facilities are made available to and are utilized by groups and organizations within the university; sometimes classes are held there. For example, the local chapter of the State University Annuitants Assn. sometimes meets there.

Q: Yes, it enriches the campus. How do you feel the university has succeeded in its mission to this area; what we came here to do? Have we done it?

A: I feel that the university has succeeded very well in achieving its goals. For example, I'm thinking mostly about the early days, - remember the closest state university to this area was Carbondale and from Edwardsville it's 110 or 115 miles away. From East St. Louis,

it's 110 miles, and so on. So, one goal was to provide an opportunity for area people to have access to public higher education. With the coming of the university that became true, became available.

I've talked to many people, in the early days I talked to many people, who I said, "I would never have gotten a higher education degree had the University not been here." This was especially true for young adults who had families, who couldn't possibly go off campus for residence, who continued their employment here, but took advantage of weekend and evening courses and earned their degrees.

To that extent, it has served its purpose. There are many people who have college degrees from SIU Edwardsville who are the first persons in their families ever to have gotten a college education and degree. We refer to them as "first generation" graduates.

A: Through the years, as the university developed,- I haven't worked at other universities. I've been very pleased pleased at the development of the total university program. It's now a quality institution and it offers good programs.

Q: Would you do it all over again, Bruce?

A: Yes, I would. For me, it was a good move to come here, because I had a part in a growing institution. That was a great thing. Everything was moving ahead, moving forward - I like that.

Q: So, no regrets.

A: No regrets. I even wrote a note to Harold See and in the postscript I assured him that I had no regrets. I said it was a good move for us to come to SIU and Edwardsville, thanks to you.

Q: You wrote him recently?

A: Yes, even yesterday I wrote him. After the event last week, that evening we took Helen and Harold See to dinner and then to our home.

Q: Oh, how nice.

A: So we had gotten a thank you note back from them for our hospitality. Later I sent him some material and news clippings.

Q: I'm glad to hear that. They came to my office after the luncheon, then they went to Going's home for a while in the afternoon, and then they, I didn't know, but obviously they then came over to your place.

A: Spent the evening with us.

Q: Making it a thoroughly enjoyable day, I'm sure. I'm glad to know that personally, that that happened.

A: I'm glad we did. I was afraid maybe they wouldn't have any invitation that evening.

Q: Well, obviously, they didn't. I think you and your wife were most generous and perspicacious. I think that if it had just been that everybody left them, it would have been a little disappointing. So, I'm delighted that they had this personal contact.

A: Did he get any tour of the campus?

Q: Yes. That morning. It started at 10:00. Galen Pletcher showed him around.

Now, we've discussed all kinds of things, Bruce. Would you care to comment further on anything we've talked about, or on anything we haven't talked about?

A: I don't know. I'm pretty much talked out, I think.

Q: Well, you've told us a great deal. Thanks, Bruce for coming by, thanks for sharing the written records that you've donated to the university to supplement this oral interview of your 25 year career here. So, I'll just say thank you.

A: Well, it was my pleasure, Stanley. I would have been disappointed if I hadn't been given the opportunity to contribute something here. We had a great time. It's been a great career, really.

Q: Well that's another high note, so we'll quit on that.

Index

A

Alton, 10, passim

B

Blount, Dale, 6, 7

Bond issue, 3, 5, 8

B

Brubaker, Mrs., 2

C

Casstevens, Emory, 6, 8

D

Daley, Mayor, 9

Dey, Raymond, 3

E

Education Administration, 4,
passim

EDEC, 12

Extension Services, 6, 10

F

Fuller R., Buckminster, 13

G

Going, Wm., 16

H

Helicopter incident, 7

I

Illinois Principals Assn., 4, 11

M

Morris, Delyte, 3, 11, 13

N

North Central Assn. of Colleges
and Secondary Schools, 4

R

Religious Center, 13, 14

Rendleman, John, 6

S

School of Education, 1, passim

See, Harold, 1, 9, 11, 16

Shaw, Wm., 7

Southwestern Illinois

Superintendents Forum, 11

Stevens, Clarence, 3, 10

Stratton, Gov., 8

U

University Bond Issue, 3, 5, 8