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## Cox, Charles - Oral History Interview

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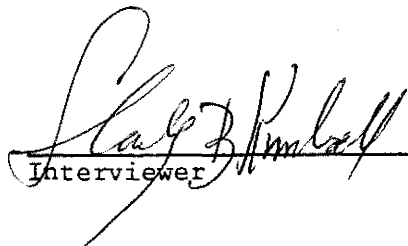
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ORAL HISTORY

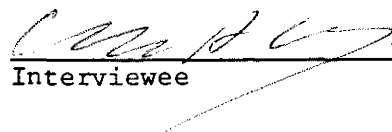
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Interviewer

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 5/7/91

  
Interviewee

Address: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: 5/6/91

Date of Accession: \_\_\_\_\_

SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer 1991

Charles Cox Interview, May 7, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: COX.507

Q: Now, my good friend Charles Cox thanks for coming to my office today, May 6, 1991 to make your contribution to this collection of memories and reflections about the good 'ol days.

A: Well I hope there'll be a little bit there, Stan. You know when you retire....or at least in my case, I closed the door and I never looked back. And I put those memories way in the back and I collect new memories as I go through life.

Q: But you have a certain obligation. We all have a certain obligation to share. You were a vital part of the building of this place and so now that you're here let's start recording some of those....

A: Okay.

Q: Why did you come here in the first place?

A: Well, I don't want to give you a long story. I'll try and make this as short as I can.

Q: In 1961.

A: Yes. I came in '61. I got out of school in '49, I went to the University of Illinois and I studied journalism. Back then my ambition was to own a weekly newspaper. Everybody that was in journalism had the idea that they'd get a job on a city newspaper and retire to a country weekly. It was just like going out to pasture.

My idea was start on the country weekly newspaper and not do that. So I took a job at a little paper, a twice weekly paper, in Newton, Illinois. I worked there for a year and a half. I think my starting salary was about forty dollars a week. The publisher who had come from Mattoon, he said well you take ten dollars more out of the cash drawer each week. Which I was naive enough not to know that that could be dangerous because I was the one going to the cash drawer to take ten dollars out, not him handing it to me. Luckily it worked.

Anyway I stayed there for about a year and a half. My father had been scouting around trying to find a weekly newspaper for sale. He found one in Altamont, IL. in Effingham County. So with some help from the family and a loan from the bank, my wife and I bought a weekly newspaper. I was still pretty green. I was about, oh, twenty-six years old, something like that. My wife and I were married in '47 while we were both still in school. And anyway we bought that paper in May '51.

I really didn't know too much about management, but I knew how to write and I was enthusiastic and my wife was too. There was a little apartment right in the same building. We lived right there. Walked out the door right out on the shop. We worked hard. One of our children was born while we were there.

After about seven and a half years we decided that we weren't finding it very easy in the weekly newspaper business. It wasn't fun. It was a lot of work. We never had a vacation. So we decided to sell our newspaper.

Now when Delyte Morris came to SIU Carbondale as president of course that was the only SIU then, he brought with him from the University of Illinois a man named Bill Lyons as head of Public Relations. One of the first things Bill established was an organization called the Southern Illinois Editorial Association. It was an organization of editors and publishers of weekly newspapers in southern Illinois. Bill's office fed editors news stories about the university and most little weekly newspapers had a lot of space to fill and not enough to go in it.

And I was one of those people. The editors met twice a year, once at Carbondale in the spring and once in the winter somewhere. I was president in 1957 and 8. The editor who was president hosted the winter meeting. It was sometime in January or February at his home town. Jeannie and I hosted the meeting that winter. Bill knew that we were wanting to sell the newspaper. Paul Simon, who was a good friend of ours, looked at it. He had made an offer to buy one at Metamora. He said well if this fella at Metamora turns us down one more time we're gonna buy yours. Well the fella at Metamora didn't turn him down and he didn't buy our paper. We ended up selling it to one of the people who worked for us.

Bill Lyons said at that time, why don't you find yourself a job in some little college and get about three years of college public relations experience. Maybe something will happen. I didn't know what he was talking about. The new president of McKendree College at

Lebanon, Illinois, which is just about thirty-five miles from here, had come to that meeting to ask the editors if they thought he should close McKendree College because it was not surviving very well. It didn't have many students. It was taking hand outs and begging for money. The college president knew that I was wanting to sell the paper. He said, well if you sell your paper why don't you come over to McKendree College and we'll start a public relations program over there. There has never been one at McKendree before. And he says we'll see what we can do.

Well it all fit. Bill Lyons said get three years of public relations experience and this man says come over and lets start a public relations program at McKendree College. Well that was in May I believe it was of 1958. We sold the paper. I called the man at McKendree and said we've sold the paper. We're ready for the job. He says come on over. We can't pay you a lot of money. So we moved to Lebanon. Bought a house and I started work with him and we began a public relations program for McKendree College.

I not only wrote news stories I took all the pictures for the yearbook. I built a little darkroom in my basement. I used my own equipment. On the side I did a few weddings to kind of help pay for the supplies and things that I used because I wasn't getting paid extra for the photography supplies I used at the college. The president resigned in 1960. He realized that he was batting his head against the wall, that he couldn't do anything.

It wasn't too long after that Bill Lyons came over to see me one day and asked if I could get a day off. I said sure my time's pretty flexible. He said well I'm gonna have somebody come over and pick me up in a car and take me to Edwardsville and show me something. And I

had been reading in the paper about some activity up here at Edwardsville. We didn't know what it was. There were reports that the state was buying land and they were gonna build a prison here and that the people were rebelling against it. They didn't want a prison. Very mysterious. So he sent somebody over. It was Ray Spahn.

Ray was in the Humanities Department here for years. Retired now. Lives in Tucson, Arizona. Ray at that time headed up the what little news service offerings they had on this campus. And the reason he was picked for that was that during World War II he and Irving Dilliard at the conclusion of World War II were in Germany and they helped establish a United States information agency office and library in occupied Germany. And that was his total experience in doing that. But Ray was a good man and he knew enough to know that if he didn't know something to ask somebody. And he was a good manager for that as it got started and went under way.

So Ray brought me over here and toured me around and showed me some farms and some farm land and says they're gonna build a university over here. Do you think you might want to work over here? He took me to East St. Louis and he took me to Alton. Showed me they were teaching classes in the old East St. Louis High School and the old Shurtleff Campus then. Now this was still 1960, late 1960. And he took me back to Lebanon and I didn't hear anything. He let me out and I thanked him for the day and I didn't hear from Bill Lyons. And one day Bill stopped by to see me. Bill had a habit of just dropping by. Very quiet man. He never, never put on any pressure or anything. He just sort of fit like an old slipper. And he said well



if you're interested in moving over to start over here we'd like to have you but there is a few things we have to get out of the way first.

Now Pete Akers, a man who grew up in Chester, Illinois, was the executive editor of the *Chicago Sun Times*. He was also chairman of the Board of Trustees at McKendree College. His I think great-great grandfather had been one of the early presidents of McKendree College so he had a family and historical interest in it and he volunteered his services. And he would come down there a few times a year to the meetings and each time he came he brought a whole car trunk load of books to give to the library at McKendree College. Books that publishers had sent to his newspaper for his people to review. Anyway Bill was a good friend of Pete Akers and he knew the value of keeping Pete Akers' friendship. And Bill wasn't quite sure where I fit in with McKendree's plans but he wanted clearance from Pete Akers before he hired me so he said well I have to clear this with him which he did and got the blessing from him.

And about that time I begin to hear that - and you saw it in the newspapers... That's the way I really heard it. I didn't hear it. I saw it... that there was a little problem over here. There was a man name See and I'm not too clear on all this. A man named See who President Morris had put in charge of things here. And apparently Mr. See had done some things or made some announcements that should have been made by Mr. Morris. Mr. Morris suspected that this man was trying to upstage him a little bit. You may go back far enough for this, Stanley, to know that there was a kind of division of the faculty people here and their loyalties to Morris or See. And Mr. See even today I think has some people - community people as well as

faculty people - who had a great deal of loyalty to him. I think there was a report that maybe never was ever published, but some copies of it were made that pleased some people and maybe didn't please some other people within the university.

And you know, you're probably more informed on this than I, much more because I really didn't - I saw him the day I came over here to sign my application for a job. He was on his way out. That was his last day. My first - I shouldn't say my first day on the job, but the day I came over to sign aboard was the day he was moving out. And I think what it was that Mr. Morris sent him on a trip with the instructions don't come back was what I had heard.

Q: As we say he was kicked up stairs.

A: Yeah, but that didn't affect me and I had nothing to do with it. So I'm glad that I didn't come here until after all of those problems were over. My first day on the job was January 15, 1961. I commuted from Lebanon. Drove over here in a little Volkswagon. I remember that day more than any other day because it started snowing that morning and I drove over here and it was snowing and it was hard to see. I didn't know my way too well either. I think I came through Troy and the interstate of course wasn't in. It was all the little blue highways as they call them today.

As the day moved on the snow continued to pile up and about three o'clock in the afternoon somebody says you better go home. And by that time there was about eight inches of snow on the ground and I wasn't sure that little Volkswagon was going to get me back to Lebanon. It scared me to death.

The first administrative office on the Edwardsville campus was in a building that now houses the Security Office for the campus. President Morris had an office there as did Dean William Going.

At the time I arrived on campus Dr. Harold See, who had been in charge of developing the new facility, until he made the mistake of thinking he was more important than the president, had been sent on a world tour with orders not to return to SIU, and Dean Going was second in command of things. It was he who interviewed and hired the first faculty members who were to teach at Edwardsville. Dean Going is an elderly man living alone in Edwardsville now. His wife is dead. If you were to ask most people at the university who he was they wouldn't have an idea. He's been forgotten. And he did so much to form the direction this branch of the university was to take in its early stages.

I always remember the first thing they gave you was a desk and a typewriter, a used typewriter, and a desk pen set. That desk pen set was I guess your status symbol, but everybody got a brand new one of those. And I carried that thing with me in my moves from one building to another around here for a long time because they had a property number on the back of it and it was probably worth about five dollars. That thing was on the books. And I don't know what ever happened to it. It was probably turned back in to surplus property at one time or another. That would be a museum piece today if something like that was still available. I remember it had a felt bottom and they had the university number on it.

Charles Butler, a good friend, was housed in the same building with me. He worked for President Morris. He eventually moved over to the other building with Mr. Morris and became sort of an

administrative secretary. He screened people and made sure the appointments were kept and that every paper that went out of that office had every word spelled correctly and that the grammar was right and the page was perfect in every way. Charles was a very meticulous person in that regard.

Mr. Morris had a private secretary over there - a lady whose name I don't know who sat in an office next to his. But Charles was the first person you saw when you came in the door. He received the mail when it came in, opened, and distributed the mail over there.

But anyway he was back in this pool with me and he and I became very close friends and have remained very close friends over the years. Charles now lives in near Ocala, Florida, in a little town called Citra. He retired a couple years ago. Moved to Ocala to be near his sister.

Q: Why did you stay so long, Charles?

A: Well I don't know. Really. Well I do to. It was exciting to begin with because everything was new. I wrote news stories. That was the first thing I did.

Then they knew I had the photography experience and the background and liked it and they incorporated that with it. Then later on I had a choice of either staying as a writer or becoming the full time campus photographer and I chose photography because back in those early days whenever you wrote a story it went through about four hands after you wrote it in the administration and everybody made a change. By the time that story got ready to go out to the newspaper you didn't even recognize it and there wasn't too much they

could do about a picture to change it. It had to stay right the way it was and that was one thing. I guess I always had a love for photography back from when I was a kid and got my first camera, but that's two or three other stories. Anyway I took pictures and I wrote, but I enjoyed the photography.

There was something going on all the time. You'd go to the airport to meet people who were flying in here from New York from RCA or from NBC who were consultants on acoustics or sound for the theater or someplace like that. You would get to talk to these people when you would drive back to the campus or people like Buckminster Fuller. Now people would give their right arm to have been able to shake hand with him and yet he's a person who was here quite often and I would talk to just like I'm talking to you. And I had a son who was interested in naval architects and has become a naval architect and Mr. Fuller was made aware of that and he always asked about my son and his activities and how he was doing in school. He had a very personal interest in him. And he was always willing to take time to let you take his picture.

Q: Tell us about some of the other big names, interesting people you met over the years.

A: The architect who designed the campus buildings was Gyo Obato. He was a partner in a St. Louis firm called HOC, Helmuth, Obato, and Kassebaum. He was a young man in 1961. I saw his picture in the paper the other day and he looks as old as me. He's gray haired. Saw him on television too. So he's getting older just like the rest of us. But he was a young man then and he was in meeting after

meeting. I was privy to a lot of those meetings - many with people whose names I don't even remember or know and didn't at that time because my job was to take pictures of Mr. Morris and these people in these meetings and the planning sessions.

Every time there was a meeting there was always a formal time for pictures so there would be a record of it. And those things have been put in the archives of the university. I hope that over the years they are not destroyed, that somebody doesn't think these things are worthless and kick 'em off in the corner and they end up in the garbage dumpster.

Q: No. I'm sure they will not. We have excellent archivists and of course that's where this interview is going, Charles, and it will be there as long as the university.

A: Later in the '60's there were a lot of celebrities and people. on camous, performers on television now and my wife gets tired of hearing me say, I took a picture of that person when he was out at the MRF. Or I saw this guy. I took a picture of this person. Of course a lot of people aren't interested in the MRF phase of this university.

Q: The Mississippi River Festival.

A: That's right. I think it was about 1967 when the St. Louis Symphony was having a lot of problems with trying to keep their musicians in St. Louis because their season - sort of like a school teacher's season - they worked so many months out of the year and

they didn't work so many months out of the year, but they didn't get paid for the months they didn't work. And they had offers from other orchestras.

So President Morris, and some of the people who were supporters of the symphony had some meetings and he or they originated the idea that maybe there could be a summer concert site established over here that would give those symphony members some summer work and maybe attract some music lovers to the campus.

Some of those big businesses in St. Louis were members of the symphony board and Mr. Morris would have meetings with those people over here. The only time I ever did know that he wasn't thinking big enough was at that time. He conceived the idea of that symphony playing in a area behind Tract 66 which was the old photo service building on Bluff Road, where I eventually ended up. There was a little lane. It went back up behind that house.

Q: Off Bluff Road.

A: Off Bluff Road. There was a little pond back there that had dried up. A dam had been built and this little lane went over that dam and then wandered up the hill and finally came up to the campus here from the west. There was another route also picked but this was a more treacherous route. And he conceived of the idea in the early times that the dam could be the stage where the symphony would sit and they could do a little ground work there and the audience could be seated down in where the pond was on little pads established on that hill looking down on it.

They couldn't conceive I think of the vast audiences that that fest would finally attract. Well those plans were soon discarded totally and a new site was picked and the horizon became so much bigger, but before it did I was instructed to go out and buy a panorama camera that could take in a hundred and eighty degree angle.

I took picture after picture of that area. We blew those up and they put them on boards for vieweing at meetings. Well after several weeks of discussion they finally abandoned that site and went to the other side on the north, but that was the beginning of that and it went on from there..

Q: That has been briefly mentioned by others but no one has given us this insight. So thank you...

Q: Charles, you were here from '61 to '86 - twenty-five years. Now over those twenty-five years what would you consider your major contributions to this university and the area of the university?

A: Well, if I did anything it was probably something that was so easy for me to do and so simple and worked so well because I knew so many editors and publishers of newspapers in Southern Illinois. I used to take what we call the home town pictures of a student doing something and then that picture was sent to their home town paper.

Over the years that was probably the thing that I'm proudest of of what I did and I think that most people would not recognize that as a contribution but anybody in the newspaper field or in public relations would recognize that as something because it's difficult to



get a picture, a publicity picture, in a paper because what you're doing you're asking for free advertising when you do that. And we did it in a way that was soft and it came as a little bit of home town news and all little papers were looking for home town news.

Now today things have changed. The printing processes for newspapers have changed. Expenses have gone up. They don't have the space for things like that like they did in those days. But it was an inexpensive way of advertising the university and I had friends in the St. Louis area on both of the St. Louis papers, writers and photographers, some of them had been students working for me when at SIUE.

It was so easy to get picture either of the St. Louis papers or on the AP or UPI wire services or in these home town papers. And I think if I contributed anything it was that. If there was anything else it was a pictorial record of the history of this university as it grew in the early days from the just the bare fields through the construction of the buildings up to the occupancy of the buildings and a record of the people who were involved.

Q: Well, Charles, I'm a professional historian and that to me is a great contribution. You mentioned, you handled it almost as a throw away, a pictorial record. Well that's extremely important. A pictorial record to augment and correct perhaps the written record is extremely important and now we're into the oral record. So you're now contributing to the oral record...

A: Well that's true.

Q: of this university.

A: I'm pleased that you asked me to do it. Although I'm hazy on a lot of things.

Q: A moment ago you said you had friends - the Illinois editors and you knew people at the *Post Dispatch* and the *Globe Democrat*, now I would like your opinion. I would like to ask you this question. How fair and adequate do you feel this St. Louis press was towards us as a university? Their coverage of us.

A: Well when there were two papers in St. Louis where they were competing there was a great deal more coverage than there is today since there is only the *Post Dispatch* and the *Globe Democrat* was traditionally a Republican newspaper, thought of as a Republican newspaper in southern Illinois - and it had a great deal more subscription coverage in southern Illinois than did the *Post Dispatch*.

The *Post Dispatch* was always thought of in southern Illinois as a little bit snobbish. It was more for people of a little higher elevation in the social status. We got an awfully lot of good coverage, the university did, in the *Globe* and because the *Post* was in competition with them at that time there was quite a bit too. Bill Lyons was a close personal friend of a lot of the people on the *Globe Democrat*. He would go over there and spend a half hour or fifteen minutes with them and it helped immensely in keeping them friends of the university.

Q: Bill Lyons, his title, please.

A: Bill had the title of I think Director of Public Relations.

Q: I have lived on both sides of the river. I have always maintained that the *Post Dispatch* if there was anything bad about this university it would make all editions. If they bothered with anything good, they'd bury it in the Illinois edition.

A: That's probably right. Because many people aren't aware, you are and I am too, that most city newspapers have several editions and the Globe and the Post both they had an Illinois and they had a out state Missouri edition and they had a metro edition and south county edition and west county and north county and you wouldn't see the same stories in all editions. I think they had at one time as many as six editions of that newspaper besides a general one that went out or including the general one that went out. So you're right. If it was bad, and the Globe did that sometimes too, I'm sure, but if it was a good thing it was in the Illinois edition. It was aimed at the people who would see it.

You know that's something that the university is still fighting - trying to get recognition from across the river. An awfully lot of students from the metro area of St. Louis come over here because even before UMSL was established they could come over here and get a cheaper education than going to Columbia or to someplace else. You have to remember back in the early days there wasn't much in the way of colleges in this area.

Now they've got junior colleges and everything else around. And Southeast Missouri was just a little teachers college as Carbondale started out. I think that we get or over the years have gotten a lot of students from across the river.

Q: Do you think that the attitude of too many people in greater St. Louis is that there is really nothing that the east side is, no good can come out of the east side, is that not a prevalent...

A: I imagine that was because they thought of the east side as East St. Louis.

Q: Yes.

A: And it's a shame that it had the stigma that it did many years ago of the gangster element being there, of course that covered all of southern Illinois and that's another story right there.

Q: Yes.

A: Books have been written about that and more will be written about that. But I'm sure that's probably true and nobody ever heard of Edwardsville. When I first called over here - the first time I made a phone call over here I was living in Lebanon before I was hired over here - I went through a telephone operator. I didn't dial directly to where I wanted. I got a telephone operator and I gave her a number and she connected me. And that shows you the change that's come and the university brought that change.

Q: Have you ever seen that T-shirt that says "Where in the hell is Edwardsville?"

A: No. I think several of us could have asked that.

Q: What are some of your greatest satisfactions and your most pleasant memories of your twenty five years here?

A: Well I guess some of my most pleasant memories were of seeing these buildings finally completed and classes really beginning. I didn't have anything to do with the building of it. I took pictures when they went up but that was just a job doing that. But to see - you know after so long a time you begin to wonder if there was ever going to be a completion date for these buildings. The Peck building and the library were the two first ones to open up and there were so many areas in these buildings that weren't completed even when the classes first began and of course they continue to renovate just like outside your window right now.

Another area of work that brought me a lot pleasure was the Mississippi River Festival. Now a lot of people criticized that. I had to work out there. I didn't get paid extra for it and I had a lot of privileges I guess because I didn't have to pay, but I got to meet a lot of people. I got to take the pictures of a lot of talented people. And I've always had an interest in entertainment and it was always a lot of fun and it was a satisfying experience to be able to take pictures of entertainers, a lot of them at the start of their careers and see their careers go on from those early days. What was the other part of your questions?

Q: Your happiest memories.

A: Well that would be a happy one.

Q: Any other pleasant, happy things that come to mind.

A: Oh I'm sure there were things that at the time were happy. I tried to enjoy what I did. I really liked what I did.

A: At one time there weren't a lot of people here who really did like what they were doing. They were here but they were just walking through life and not getting any enjoyment out of it. I enjoyed, I got up in the morning and I enjoyed coming to work. I looked forward to it because I was doing what I liked to do. I was being creative. Every time I took a picture I was creating something - no two were alike - and that brought me a lot of satisfaction. Probably a lot of people didn't think I was doing much or didn't have too much importance to it but I had a good time, made a contribution, and I was getting paid for it. That was the nice thing about it.

Q: Towards the end of your career you were given a retrospective exhibit on campus.

A: I remember that. David Huntly, it was very kind of him to do that.

Q: And there was a rather impressive booklet that reproduced some of your better photographs as a honor to your poetry with the camera.

A: Well I think photographers are like artists. Everybody's got a style and you can tell the style of artist. And I think you develop a style as a photographer that you can't change. Its something within you comes out and it does that way and you can't become something different.

A year or two ago my stepmother was cleaning out a bunch of old books and photo albums that she had at her home and she found some old pictures that I took when I was a kid and I saw in those pictures some of the things that I developed later on. I'd take pictures of farm animals or fields or things but I'd have an old piece of farm machinery in the foreground and maybe off to the side as something to give a little depth to the picture or maybe somebody standing in silhouette by a wagon looking out at a field.

I used those same techniques as I moved through my life as a photographer and I did it unconsciously. I didn't realize it. I could see so many things that I developed later on in those early pictures that I did when I was twelve, thirteen, fourteen years old in old snapshots. So I was developing a technique then that carried me through. But after you do that for so long a time it becomes natural. You don't have to say have I got the horizon balanced. Have I got the subject separated from all these other things. Am I close enough or have I got this. Is my light right. That all comes to you. So it's something that after a while comes pretty easy. But no two people take pictures the same way.

It used to be I could spot in the newspapers the work of different photographers and without seeing their name under the picture could tell you probably nine times out of ten who took the picture because I knew what their style was and they couldn't change it anymore than I could.

Q: What were some of your greatest frustrations around here?

A: Well I probably, the greatest frustration I had was , and I'm going to mention names here...

Q: Please do.

A: There was a time in the university when they developed two news service offices, one at Carbondale and a satellite office up here. And Ray Spahn who started the program up here in this office under Bill Lyons' guidance; he served his purpose in the early days of keeping things organized but actually his field was teaching German. That was what his love was and what he was assigned to do.

He had that position in the Humanities Department and so he moved out of the news service area. Later Bill Lyons was under pressure to get somebody on a permanent basis as News Service Director up here and he was running close to the end of the year when his money for that position was going to run out and he had to get somebody in a hurry. He couldn't really pick and choose and that was the only time I ever saw Bill sort of flustered.



He went to a conference and he picked about the first person he could get. And he picked a man named A. R. Howard who came from Houghton, Michigan, a little bitty school called Michigan Tech and he got him sight unseen which was a mistake as that man was totally incapable of operating a university News Service and managing people. He was a frustrated man who was very insecure and his philosophy was to try and get rid of all the people who had been in that office before he came and bring in new people that he could have as his loyal supporters and he made an attempt to do that to everybody that was in there. And I was one of his targets.

And he did get rid of some people in ways that I don't think I would want to tell you because it would be dangerous for me to say. There could be some legal implications the way he got rid of some people. And he asked me to support him in that and then he turned on me so I was very cautious of him. But the thing he did to me, he had an audit of my office thinking that that's the way he would get me. He would find something wrong and while we had a very simple bookkeeping system it was accurate and it was honest and he didn't find anything wrong. The only thing that audit showed turned up was my office was paying for a student worker that I didn't have. And when we had a review of that audit I said to the people from the auditor's office and he was present, I said there's something that bothers me here. I said this shows that I'm paying for a student worker. I said I don't have this student worker. I said I don't know where that money's going but it's not anybody that works for me and the next month when the reports came out that line was off of there. So somebody was burying a student worker in my account and it

was being paid for out of my account and I wasn't enough of an accountant to be able to read those things and understand them except for that report showing that.

But that was the only frustration. So there was a time for a few years there that I was very frustrating. I'm sure I was hard to live with and my good friend at Carbondale Robert (Rip) Stokes who was the head of the photo service down there was a relative, a distant relative, of John Rendleman. John Rendleman was the president here then, I think it was called president and Rip was often up here and was a guest in Rendleman's house and they were drinking buddies and story telling buddies together and he told John Rendleman one time when he was up here, he said if you don't get rid of A. R. Howard and get him off Charley Cox's back, you're gonna lose Charley Cox. Rip told me the next day that he had told John Rendleman and I thought by gosh I'll be fired today. I says that'll do it. That'll cook my goose. I'll be out of here. I was scared to death.

I had a phone call from A. R. Howard about the middle of the next morning. He said I want to have lunch with you. And we went out to what was then I think the Holiday Inn out here. It was sort of the meeting place for a lot of university lunches. And he was very nervous and he started apologizing to me about things and he says I don't want to lose you and going on and he said we're gonna make things right with you and he kept going. Well it wasn't until later that I talked to Rip Stokes and said what's going on here and he said well John Rendleman told A. R. Howard to straighten up and get things right with you and boy it didn't take long.

But he was a very incapable man. And it wasn't long after that that Sam Smith came in as a writer and Sam was as frustrated as I was. And I kept telling Sam I says just hang on a little bit longer something is gonna change; it has to change. And Rendleman would take me aside and he would take Sam Smith aside and he would say I know I need to fire that man but I don't have the heart to do it. I don't know what to do with him.

Well he ended up moving him off to the side to get him out of the way and finally quietly retired him after Rendleman died. But for a few years he was just stuck over in a spot where all he had to do was report in the morning and read the newspaper and sit at his desk and sleep, but and they made Sam the head of news service then. A few years later there was a man in the auditors office here - Roy - and I can't think of what his last name was; he had a heart attack and he was in the hospital in St. Louis for several weeks and I sent him a card and a little note - a nice little note and after he recovered enough to get home he sent me a letter and thanked me for the card and he said that it was one of the few notes that he had gotten. He says there's something I've been wanting to tell you for a long time and I've never had the guts to do it. He says I've kind of gotten religion since I've been in this position with my heart and he says someday I'm gonna tell you but he says it's about that audit and who ordered that audit on you that time. And I saw him once in K-Mart after that and he wouldn't tell me. I said I know who ordered that audit. It was A. R. Howard. I didn't mention Howard's name then I just told him that I knew. So that was the frustration that I had and that went over for a period of time and it was very

frustrating but after that happened it was very pleasant. That was the only thing that ever spoiled life for me. Always good things that follow bad things and I had a lot of good things after that.

Q: How about some of your funniest and most humorous experiences?

A: I've got one.

Q: I hope you have several.

A: No I don't, you know I'm sure I have had, but those things sort of slip away from you. When you retire you sort of tuck these things back. But there is one that I've got to tell you. You remember the Walking Man statue in the library and the Halloween stunt?

Q: Very well.

A: Well I'll tell you about that. Now you may hear other versions but this is the real story on this. My office at that time, and this was in the early '60's, well it had to be about 1965 because that building opened then. My office was in what was called Track 23. It was a building over here just in a field off the road of the entrance coming into the campus from the east. There was News Service in there. I had a little office on the back porch. They had enclosed it and made an office there and in the basement there had been a dirt floor and they poured a concrete floor around the furnace and boxed it off and made a darkroom for me. David Van Horn had his student work office upstairs in a little room. Placement Service, I

think Van Horn was in charge of Placement Service too at that time. It was sort of an office that operated out of a cardboard box. That was up in that room and there was another office or two in there. But anyway that's where my office was and when the library opened someone either gave to the university or they bought a copy of Rodin's Walking Man statue. I think it was valued at fifty thousand dollars which was a great deal of money at that time and it was established over in the library. Right out in the middle of the library. The great open space if you remember then because they were just beginning to put in stacks and the library opened before it was all completed.

The Walking Man was right out in the middle there and of course we had a group of religious people on this campus and one of them was a Catholic priest, Father Jim Shortal, who has since left the priesthood, married, and is in the restaurant business down by Ginger Creek. A very fine man. And he and I were sort of fun loving and he was over in my office one day in late October, a day or two before Halloween and we were sitting around talking and laughing and joking and one or the other of us said wouldn't it be funny if somebody was to put a pumpkin head on the Walking Man statue because the walking man statue was a huge statue of a naked man standing in a pose with his legs apart but he had no head and the statue must have been what nine or ten feet tall wasn't it something like that, huge thing.

He said one or the other of us said wouldn't it be funny if somebody were to put a pumpkin head on top the Walking Man for Halloween. And one thing led to another and took a picture of it. Another thing led to another and says and put some clothes on him. And Jim said well I know where I can get a pair of shorts that will

fit around that thing. Well the waist on that stature must have been 58 inches around. It would take a size 58 shorts. So we said well lets do it.

So we contacted a friend in security. They locked the buildings at night. And we told him what we had in mind and he says well I'll open the building real early in the morning for you. So the man from security opened the building and we went in real early, - about six o'clock in the morning. We had a pumpkin. We bought a pumpkin and carved out a pumpkin face. And Jim had the shorts and we thought well we need somebody in the picture so we had contacted a young co-ed the day before and said we need you out on campus for a picture the next morning. Would you meet us in front of the library and so we had all this stuff in a box and the security man opened the door and we went in.

We put the pumpkin head on top, put a candle in the thing and lit it. We had to split the shorts down the back and around the legs to get it around the legs to get it around the statue and then use taped to tape it in the back and put it on and then pose this girl with an arm load of books standing in front of it with a look of excitement and fright and took two or three pictures of it and thought boy this is a great stunt and I came back to the darkroom and developed the pictures and started to make prints and called Ed Hasse who was in the interim head of News Service at that time and Ed knew a good story when he saw one.

Ed says, oh yeah print up a bunch of those pictures. He said yeah lets get a bunch of those. We'll get this out. He called Bill Lyons at Carbondale and Bill Lyons thought it was a great idea. Well Bill made the mistake of telling two or three other people down at

the Carbondale campus about this and before noon that day word had got around down there that they had put a two dollar pumpkin head on a fifty thousand dollar statue and were gonna make fun of it and send that picture all over the country and somebody said you don't dare do that. Bill Lyons called back and says people down here aren't too crazy about that idea. He says I tell you what you do. He says you got the prints all made by that time Ed Hasse had already called some of the news papers and wire services and told them what was coming so they were expecting this - and Bill knew a good story when he saw one to and Bill said on the phone he says tell you what you do he says when you go out to lunch you just leave those pictures on your darkroom table and leave the door unlocked and we did.

And when we got back after lunch the pictures were gone. And we never asked who came to get them or anything else but those pictures were gone. Well the next day that was on the front page of the *Globe Democrat* and the *Post* and went out on the wire and it went all around the country and I remember the headline in one of the St. Louis papers "Two Dollar Pumpkin on Head of \$50,000 Statue at SIU."

Well somebody still wasn't too happy and they called for an investigation of that. They wanted to know who did it and somebody from security came to see me because they knew I had taken the picture. And I said well I'll tell you what happened. I was honest about it. I wasn't trying to hide anything. I says I'll tell you what had happened and I told him the whole story about it and he says who was the security man that let you in and I says I haven't any idea. I says I don't know who that fella was. But he says well write this up will ya. I says yeah I'll write it up. So I wrote it up and I gave it to him. I thought well I'll get fired on this.

Q: Or the security man would get fired.

A: Well nothing happened and a few days later I saw John Rendleman. I ran across him somewhere and he had a way of using swear words that just came out right and fit the case and I don't know what swear words he used but the gist of it was that was the cheapest publicity we've gotten in a long time and I never heard any more about it.

Well I don't know who suggested that maybe that would be a good tradition to start that that would be a good Halloween tradition but...And for two or three years after that some fraternity would decorate that statue and take a polaroid picture of it and make sure that polaroid picture was given to the student newspaper or passed around so that people were aware that it had happened, but after a while that sort of died.

If you asked people today they wouldn't have any idea that that ever happened. But Jim Shortal and I had quite a time doing that. We enjoyed that. And we still talk about it when we sit around a table in his restaurant sipping coffee.

Q: I think you were the only two people who could tell the real story. This has been alluded to of course by others, but this is the first time I have heard the real and full story.

Q: You mentioned John Rendleman and you had worked with him and he was very popular on this campus exceptionally popular on this campus and one reason was he had this great knack of matching faces and names. I am not good that's why I'm interested in this. I



understand he had a little trick. I want your reaction. I understand that when you took the annual photographs of the faculty you sent his office a copy and then I understand he had an album of those and he occasionally he would flip through it to remind him of who was who on campus and then he could address say the Social Science School or the History Department and flabbergast us because he knew who we were by name.

A: Well that may be true but I do recall that we had a standing order to make a set of every picture we took like that and send to the President's office and once it got there I don't know what became of it. And it's very possible that what you have heard is the way he used that as a help to help him recognize these different people. But he was a politician and every politician has to remember names so he had developed that into quite a technique. I started to tell you before that tape ran out, a picture I took of Rendleman and a couple people at a dinner here that really didn't have a great deal of significance until later on when things developed and it brought a lot of smiles to people's faces. I don't know what this dinner was. I'm sure there were community people here but there was a head table on the dias at one end of the room. I think this was after the ballroom had been completed in the University Center, but the picture I took was one of Rendleman and his friend Paul Powell who was then Secretary of State, a man from Vienna, Illinois, the southern part of the state, and Mel Price who was our Congressman from this district and they were seated together. I don't know what order they were - if John was between the two or what but you could take a look at Paul Powell and you knew that he was a politician. Now there was a story

that Rendleman was sort of a protege of Paul Powell. If he was he learned an awful lot of politics, some of it good and some of it not so good probably through sitting at the feet of Paul Powell.

But anyway in this picture they were sharing a joke when I took it and they weren't necessarily aware of me taking the picture. But when it was done each one of them had a different look on his face that anybody who knew them would look at it and just break into a laugh because the looks on their faces told a story that these people knew about and that picture sort of remained dead in the files for many, many years.

David Huntly pulled that out when he asked me to put that series of pictures together for that photo exhibit. By that time Rendleman had died and Paul Powell probably had died in disgrace. No he didn't die in disgrace; he just died. But in the mean time the episode of the shoe box came out when Paul Powell kept a room in a hotel in Springfield as you recall and at the time of his death John Rendleman was called to Springfield to clear out that room and Tom Leffler who was his confidante and head of security for the Carbondale campus. Tom had been brought up to this campus and acted as a confidante and body guard and chauffeur for John Rendleman and no telling what else. When they went up to clear out this room they opened the closet they saw all these shoe boxes in there and opening one of them up saw it was stuffed with money and discovered that the closet was filled with shoe boxes and each shoe box was stuffed with money. And you know that caused quite a furor in the state when that happened and that picture then became a treasured thing for some people who knew it.

I had a lot of requests after that, after David Huntly brought that picture back to life, a lot of requests for copies of that picture to be made and another picture was of Clyde Chote and Paul Powell and John Rendleman standing by an old black Cadillac Limousine over behind the president's office on the lake after a meeting. They all had black suits on. They looked like a bunch of mafia characters standing around that car and you could recognize each one of them. I took a picture of them. There was one that they weren't posing for and each one of them had his own little world that he was in when the picture was taken. That was another one that was brought out by David Huntly and a lot of chuckles were made over that, but those were humorous pictures and they're treasures and there's a lot of history in them.

Those pictures would stir up a lot of memories for people who knew those people and I hope that those pictures are never lost, the negatives are in the archives.

Q: What would you like to record, Charley, that would never make it into an official history around here that you haven't already shared with us?

A: Oh gosh. Well I don't know. I tell you I did learn something right after I came here, two things, and this wouldn't be part of the history. You know I had had about a year and a half experience working on a newspaper - writing stories and taking pictures and even doing a little radio broadcast a couple mornings a week over a local radio station of the news of the community I lived in. And then those seven years that my wife and I had the newspaper and the three

years at McKendree College and you'd think that that would teach you something about journalism, but I always remember the first story that I wrote when I came over here.

Bill Lyons gave it to me. There had been a student from here who had a job in his spare time as a pot and pan salesman for some cookware company and they had sent a news release to Bill Lyons and Bill gave it to me. And he said see if you can't write up a little story about this and we'll send it out. And I thought well that's simple to do. So I did. I wrote about a half page or three quarters of a page story and I gave it to Bill. I don't know I think maybe it was sent out before Bill got a chance to see it. I believe that's the way it was.

A couple days after that had appeared in the newspapers Bill came to me with that story he clipped out. He said there's something I want to talk to you about and I thought uh-oh what did I do wrong. I thought I did a pretty good job you know. And he said you wrote this story and he said the name of the student is in there twice, SIU's name is in there once, but he said the name of that pot and pan company is in there seven times.

And boy he didn't have to say anymore. I knew right then what a mistake I had made and that was a lesson I always remembered that there were always people wanting to do something for you in order to get on your bandwagon and ride your coattails and get something free, get a little spin-off.

Q: All right.

A: You know something that saddened me and I assumed, I was pretty naive about construction, and you may remember this too, the number of deaths there were in the construction of this campus. I've talked to people who said there were five. I thought there were seven. At one time I could name the locations of where those deaths occurred on this campus during the construction. I've heard since then that that's not unusual for some projects this size.

Q: I was here at the time. At the time in the early '60's the rule of thumb was that you could anticipate one death per million dollars.

A: I'm sure that there are people on this campus that you'll be talking to who could set the record clear on that as to how many there were and where they occurred.

Q: There is a small plaque over by the flagpoles dedicated to the several men, I think they were all men, who lost their lives. It's five or seven.

Now I have one pleasant memory involving - well many pleasant memories involving you but one that comes to mind right now is I'll go to anybody's retirement party, Charles. If they've got punch and cookies I'll be there. And so perhaps I can speak with a little authority. I'm sure yours was the biggest retirement party that I ever went to on this campus. I remember it well. It was in the Goshen Lounge and I remember among the things they had given you was an entire lawn swing as I recall.

A: We have that on our back patio now. And you know that was the most practical gift and this time of year from now throughout the summer until winter comes will be used and is used almost every day of the week. We can't go out our back door without seeing it and it's time for me to wash it up more. I washed it a time or two but it needs a good cleaning to get the winter dust off. We used to take that thing down in the winter time and wrap the swing in plastic and put it on a table in another part of the patio which was under the roof. And each spring I would paint that with a clear marine varnish. Well I've got so many coats on that now that it's established. It doesn't need any for a while. But we enjoy that.

Our next door neighbor, Lyle Willard, who retired as president of the First Federal Savings and Loan a few years ago, has a little granddaughter. And when she was just a little tot a few months old in the winter time before we took the swing down he'd bundle her up in a snowsuit and bring her over and sit out in that swing even when we weren't outside and just rock back and forth for five or ten minutes. And she grew up rocking in that in the spring and now they keep her two days a week and she still comes over and wants to play in that swing. That was the most practical gift of anything anybody ever could have thought of. Jennie and I thought that was wonderful.

I probably made a fool of myself at that party. I've looked back on that and I thought, I didn't know what to say. I'm not a speech maker. I've always wished that I could talk in public, but I can't.

Q: Well one final question, Charles.

A: Okay.

Q: Anything else you'd like to add?

A: I can't think of anything. Probably when I get home I'll think of a lot of things, Stanley.

A: Well I feel honored that you asked me to do this, Stanley. I really do.

Q: You mentioned once that a photographer is like a piece of furniture. Well I do a lot of accompanying. I played the piano and an accompanist is just like a piece of furniture...

A: Yup.

Q: ...but there's one thing about it. We both hear all, see all, and say very little.

A: Yeah. You know years ago we had dinner, Jennie and I had dinner in a Chinese restaurant over in St. Louis and at the end of the dinner they give you a fortune cookie.

Q: Yes.

A: And the fortune that was in my cookie said you see beauty in the ordinary. I thought that does to describe me very well. When I was in this office over in this track house on bluff road a lot of times I'd go out on a shooting assignment and come back and the film had to be developed and there were two or three, four, five exposures left on it. I didn't want to waste them. I'd take pictures of dead leaves or some of the weeds, close up pictures of the weeds out behind that building.

I could see beauty there that nobody else could see and over the years I made quite a collection of photographs of things like that. And those negatives remain in the archives with the other things. But it brought me a lot of pleasure because I could see beauty in a little twig of grass or a little dried up leaf or a poison ivy leaf that was turning red in the fall after the first frost, something like that. Nobody else would see that or would care, or a thistle or another plant that had a little cottony seed that blows in the wind - you get the light behind it just right and get up close to it and take a picture and to me it had a lot of meaning and brought me a lot of relaxation and a lot of pleasure.

I always thought that if, when I die if somebody wants to spend the money for an epithet for me that would be it that he saw beauty in the ordinary because I did and that was sort of a philosophy that I had because I could take an ordinary thing and in my mind create a little beauty out of it. Thank you Stanley and bless your life and work.

Q: Well that's a place to - we have to quit somewhere sometime somehow...



A: That's a good way to stop.

Q: So let us quit on that...

A: Okay.

Q: ...and so thanks Charley Cox photographer extraordinaire.

A: Well thank you Stanley. I appreciate your asking me to do this.

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