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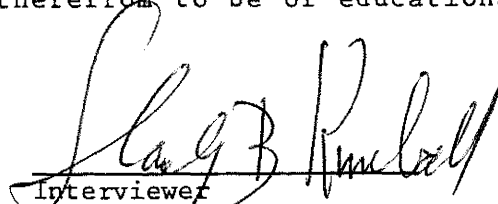
SOUTHERN ILLINOIS UNIVERSITY EDWARDSVILLE

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ORAL HISTORY

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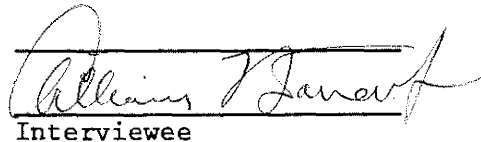

Interviewer

Address:

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Date:

4/24/91


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Date:

4/24/91

Date of Accession: _____

SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer, 1990-91

Lester Farrar Interview, April 24, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: FERRAR.424

Q: Les, thanks for coming to my office on this beautiful spring day April the 24th, 1991. For the record I am talking to Les Farrar, coordinator of Admission and Records.

A: Academic Scheduling.

Q: It's used to be Admissions and Records didn't it?

A: Well, I'm in Admissions and Records, but that's the actual title of my job.

Q: I checked the official guide here and that explains where that came from. As I hope we will find out if I ask you judicious questions, I hope we are going to learn a lot about the internal workings of that office, it's successes, funny stories, horror stories, and contributions and how your office has fitted into the overall evolution of this university. I believe you came here in 1961.

A: '58.

Q: That's a year before I came. You are a true pioneer. Why did you come to SIUE in the first place?

A: I was just out of service and I had gotten an early release from the Air Force to attend graduate school at SIU. I was going to initially get a graduate a degree in education and curiously a very good friend of mine was renting a home from Tom Evans who was then the assistant dean of students down in East St. Louis. And I was looking for a job and not having a great deal of success and she suggested that I contact Tom Evans and see if something would be available down at the university. Which I did and although Tom had nothing available, he referred me to another old pioneer by the name of Cliff Cornwell who was the director of the evening college down there. Cliff needed somebody so I began working in '58 for Cliff Cornwell.

Q: In East St. Louis?

A: In East St. Louis.

Q: Now you were never at Carbondale or Shurtleff?

A: I was at Carbondale as a student, but not as an employee.

Q: You come out of the Air Force. Was it Scott?

A: No. I was discharged at McCord Air Force base at Seattle.

Q: So was this your first, what should I say, academic ...?

A: My first job.

Q: You first job. Well...

A: Outside of the Air Force, and you can debate whether or not that was a job.

Q: I was in the Air Force in W.W. II. Why have you stayed here 33 years?

A: It hasn't been continuous service.

Q: Well then before I ask you that question starting in 1958 walk us through what you have done here the various positions.

A: In '58 I was the assistant to the director of the Evening College and later I became the office manager for the General Office down a East St. Louis reporting to first Jim Turner and then later Virgil Seymour. Then in 1964 I left the university to do my doctoral studies at U of I, came back to SIU Edwardsville in the Admissions Office in 1967 as the Enrollment Officer and in 1970 I switched from the Enrollment Officer to Foreign Student Admissions officer and in '72 I became the Academic Scheduling officer which I have been ever since.

Q: You went to the U of I for doctoral studies, in what discipline?

A: History. My primary field of study was in Latin American history and my secondary field of study was American history and my outside minor was Latin American anthropology.

Q: We have good number of people on campus that help us out and teach courses. Dorrie Wilton for example, yourself who else?

A: Well you have Steve Hanson in the summer.

Q: In the Graduate Office and then we have people who do the reverse. Like Earl Beard who went into administration, but came back to teach a class. Alan McCurry who went to the library, but came back and taught classes. I think our program has been greatly enriched by this.

Now coming down to the Foreign Student Office. I think we should get some of your comments on that--the difficulties, the successes, the frustrations how foreign students react to us. Would you comment on how long you were in that office position?

A: Approximately I would guess 2 1/2 years.

Q: Long enough to have experiences, share some of those with us.

A: Well I think there are a couple of problems with foreign admissions that you don't normally have with domestic admissions. Foreign credentials are so much more subjective than domestic credentials are.

Q: You mean the courses, the hours?

A: Not only that, the degrees and the level of the degree. A Bachelor of Science degree in Pakistan is not the equivalent of our Bachelor of Science degree for example. But you will get arguments about that. You get arguments about the course work they have had, whether or not it was legitimately collegiate level. There are so many variables that you have to take into account when you deal in foreign admissions.

At least when I was there, we took into account the general nature of the educational system and the level of the academic training in that education system and how that equated with ours. The age of the students was considered.

They call a lot of academic training, degrees over there. And you have to be careful about the academic vs. industrial ed. or commercial training which they try to transfer in. That's one area where it was a stressful job, in the subjective. And I could relate one episode that may illustrate that and I won't mention any names because we are getting into faculty here at SIUE. We had an individual who wanted his nephew to attend SIUE and the nephew had a Bachelor of Science degree from a certain university in India. I don't remember which one. It was my judgment that the student ought to transfer in, if at all, as a sophomore with approximately a C average. I was going to give him the benefit of the doubt.

The uncle was furious at my evaluation. He was on the faculty here and he disagreed vehemently, he wanted his nephew here in the graduate program and so he took it to a faculty committee. And I have to say that a kind of a compromise was reached. The nephew was

ultimately admitted, although my standards were upheld by the faculty committee so I'm not quite sure what was accomplished there, but it made me so angry that I wrote five different schools: Carbondale, Wash. U., University of Kansas (which has the most knowledgeable individual and graduate school admissions in the U.S. at that time), and then an old friend of mine who's the director of foreign admissions in the University of Indiana, Jim Haas. He's an old fraternity brother of mine and he is an nationally recognized figure.

Q: We have our own Jim Haas.

A: Oh, yes. But this is a different one. Believe me the two come from worlds that are vastly different. My Jim Haas was from Pochahontas, Illinois, a very small town. It is not sophisticated at all. But he is very knowledgeable and the consensus of those five were: three of the five would not have even admitted the student. They thought he was academically ineligible at any level. The schools unanimously agreed he was not a graduate student under any circumstances. None of them would have admitted him in good standing even if they would have admitted him.

I guess I kind of felt vindicated in my judgment. And the point is I'm not trying to say that I was right and the faculty member was wrong, I'm just trying to illustrate in a very particular way how judgmental and how subjective the evaluations became.

And the other area of real difficulty in terms of cultural differential is the tendency to think on the part of some cultures that anything can be negotiated. If you tell them that the term begins on September 25th and they don't want to arrive until October

14th they won't arrive until October 14th and try to negotiate starting the term on that date. They feel that they can negotiate anything and that there is no such thing as an absolute "no." This was considerably difficult for me.

The other difficulty that I had was bureaucratic and it dealt with the Immigration Service. They were tough. They were tough because they were unreasonable in some instances and inconsistent. I had one individual who had applied for a job and so I forwarded the appropriate forms to Immigration and for about a month this kid got two letters every week. One from the Immigration Service telling him, no you can't have a job, we don't think you need one. Followed up by another letter saying your support looks very precarious, so go home. So he didn't know what to do. We finally got that ironed out, but it took a lot of heartache on his part and a lot of aggravation on my part to try to deal with the bureaucrats and I don't want to condemn INS universally.

At that time, which was years ago, the most notorious immigration office in the whole U.S. was in Chicago and that's the one we had to deal with. St. Louis was magnificent. They had a reputation for being fair and handling their people quickly and with justice. You never knew where you stood with Chicago. They may have improved by now, but that's the way it was back then.

Q: Your one of the few who could record this interesting material. As an instructor I see the other end of the situation. Some of my best foreign students were real cracker jacks. But I have had a few like you were talking about that should have never been here, if only because their English was way substandard.

A: Well the language problem is much improved now from what it was when I was in this particular job. When I was doing it the university would accept a variety of demonstrations of language proficiency. Now it is pretty well limited to the one test which is a good test: The test of English as a Foreign Language. I think that if there is a problem in testing the proficiency of foreign applicants it is that there is much too much emphasis based on their ability to read and not enough on their aural comprehension.

Most of our courses are lecture courses and, granted they can probably take the text book at night and read it and get something out of it, still they don't get too much out of the lectures if they can't understand the professors. So I think we could probably stand to improve on the internal scores that we require for foreign students.

The problem that I had was that we used such a wide variety of tests that there was really not a very good way of correlating when this test was the equal of that test score and test score B was equal to test score C. It was difficult to maintain a sense of what was adequate and wasn't.

There were a couple of other problems that you deal with in foreign admissions that incidentally relate to language. For any foreign student to be admitted in the United States the admitting university has to issue what is called an "I-20" form that is a statement to the Immigration Service that this student has been admitted and that you have checked two things: One is language and two, his or her finances. What you have in the United States are two kind of problems. One is the foreign language school. Carbondale has one. They have a very good center for the study of

English as a second language. And from time to time they will give conditional admission, or used to, based on what you would do in that language school. It's non-credit. It is an acceptable thing to the Immigration Service.

There are others like that one, but the foreign student gets to this country and believes rightly or wrongly--probably rightly in some cases--that these specialty English schools are deliberately holding them back just because they want the money. The foreign student doesn't believe that his English is all that bad as they say it is. And of course if they say it's bad most of the schools won't admit you to a regular academic program. So there's this kind of a problem that goes on. It's been my experience that whenever one of these centers tells you the language is bad it generally is regardless of what the student says.

And the other aggravation is the I-20 diploma mills. And when I was doing foreign admissions, probably the most disreputable college in the nation at the time was Miami-Dade County Junior College. It seemed at times that all you had to do to get admitted as a foreign student to Miami-Dade Junior College was to be alive and breathing. And what would happen is the students would get admitted there. They would satisfy the immigration technicalities to get into the country and then they would go anywhere and camp on the admissions officer's doorstep trying to get into some other university.

Q: And you got some?

A: Oh yes. We had a lot of people who wanted to come up here and had never been to Miami-Dade. They just got the immigration approval from them and then came here and wanted to go here.

Q: Is Miami-Dade still in this racket?

A: To my knowledge it has improved, but I am really not in close touch with them. I have been out of that area for almost twenty years now or more. And I guess Tony Liston, the current Foreign Student Advisor, would know better than I would what their reputation is now. Miami has got an awful lot of foreign students.

Q: I found Indonesian students excellent. Would you care to comment on that? And from which countries were our best prepared foreign students and perhaps which countries they were somewhat less prepared?

A: Oh it's difficult to say which was the best prepared. There were examples of good preparation and bad preparation in almost every group. I suppose as a group the newly independent African-Asians were probably the most ill prepared. They just simply didn't have the educational background to get them ready for the American collegiate scene.

They had a real sense of work and they worked hard at staying here. They didn't always succeed, but in terms of having a really strong background and in terms of just general areas they probably had the most difficult problem. I would have to think that the Far East was best. At this time we didn't have very many Chinese

students. That was back before the Nixon years and the new friendship with China. But we had a lot of Japanese students and they seemed like they were not only the best prepared but had the best study habits. India and Pakistan had both kinds, good and bad.

Q: I found Lebanese students very good. All right let me tell you one strange thing to see if you ever had any similar things. There were two students here from the Mid-East. The female was thought to have had a green card. A fellow mid-easterner who did not have a green card married her. When he found out she didn't have a green card the marriage blew up in a very bad way and since they were both my students I ended up in the middle. Did you ever get involved in something like that?

A: Yes. In at least two instances with mixed results. In one I had a Near Eastern brother and sister team. I want to say Iranian, but I'm not sure that's quite accurate. But at any rate the brother was very conservative and the girl was, well she was a floozy, there's no other way to put it, and I talked to him constantly about the problem. He would come in and see me.

I should say this and again I don't mean to say anything bad about any individual, but at that time we had a Foreign Student Advisor, and again this is twenty years ago so the personalities are all gone now, who did not like his job and made it evident to the foreign student population that he didn't like his job and as a result whenever they had a problem they didn't go to him, they came to me. Because I was the first person they had ever seen on campus, being in admissions, they just kind of gravitated to me. And in

this instance he would come in and talk and he wouldn't know what to do to control his sister because she was hanging out with the wrong crowd. He had a family. She was not living with him directly. He was older and he was really worried because she was a student here; but he was going to transfer to Chicago, and he just knew that she was going to go to hell in a hand basket the instant he moved there.

As it turned out she, as I recall, flunked out of school and had to go home much to his relief so that the father could take care of her.

But, I guess the strangest situation I ever got in was a student, a girl, who was here who wanted to get in and she wasn't eligible because of language. She was from Mexico. And her husband came in to see if he could be of some help and he was an American. And the peculiar situation was she spoke virtually no English and he spoke virtually no Spanish and I wound up interpreting between the two of them and to this day I do not understand how they ever got married.

Your first impression when you here something like that is she married him to get into the country, but in the course of that particular interview, they seemed like they were very happy as man and wife. They might not speak the other language, but they spoke something well.

Q: Thanks. Did I ask you why you had stayed here so long, Les?

A: No, you didn't. And I can answer it in one sentence. I just never had any thought of leaving. I guess when I started in '58, there was so much identification with the people. As an old pioneer

you know what I'm saying, that you really felt that you were doing something worthwhile and you identified with other people who were doing the same thing. There was a real commonalty of feeling between the people who were trying to build this place and they just kind of reached that level of identification and I never lost it. I've never had any desire to go anywhere else.

Q: What do you consider your most significant contributions to SIUE?

A: I looked that question over and I honestly don't know. My tendency is to think that I never had any kind of rank of importance enough to make a significant contribution.

Q: Well I would like to debate that, but maybe not right now. The reason I asked that question is a moment ago you said you felt that what you were doing was worthwhile and you were contributing to the area.

A: Yes.

Q: This was an educationally disadvantaged area.

A: Oh yes.

Q: That's why the university is here. That's why you're here. That's why I'm here. So we had, we old timers way back when were in a position to make significant contributions just getting this place going.

A: Yes that's true. That's true.

Q: And attracting better and better people, good people. You've worked with obviously thousands of students. Have some of them gone out and shall we say made you proud that you helped them significantly achieve whatever they wanted to achieve?

A: Yes. I would have to say that every now and then you can help a student and you can do it either administratively or academically in class and later on you can see that the student has really kind of taken that second chance and has run with the football and made something out of himself or herself as the case may be.

Sometimes it works the other way, nothing you can do seems to help. But sometimes things turn out really well. I've had a couple of foreign students whom I've helped who have since obtained very responsible jobs in the local area, one is in chemical engineering, - chemical research and another is in the business field. And they were at one time in severe danger of deportation and I was able to help them stay here. And they still keep in touch from time to time.

Q: I would assume that obviously over the years you did a lot of hand holding.

A: Oh yes.

Q: Well I would consider that a significant contribution, to help them cope I think is the way we frequently phrase this.

Instead of talking about significant contributions, you seem a little overly modest on that, let's try an easier way perhaps or at least another way about your greatest satisfactions here over these thirty-three years and you're still in harness by the way.

A: Oh yes. Well I guess I always derived a lot of satisfaction, this I guess is going to sound bizarre, but I always derived a lot of satisfaction out of commencement. It just kind of summarized in one event everything we've been doing for that year and all of the years before then and you can see students whose faces you recognize and here they are they're going through commencement and they're finally making it and they're all beaming and smiling and it just kind of made you feel like you had done something worthwhile.

Every now and then I've even been able to - believe it or not I've even been able to help a faculty member from time to time.

Q: I've been here since 1959. Your's is the most refreshing, upbeat statement I have ever heard about commencement because I'm sorry to say that the general opinion around here is commencement is just a chore that we have to go through. And that is not obviously a very honorable attitude but I'm afraid it is typical. What you have said I think will change my attitude toward future commencements because I have noticed a few of my students crossing there. It is satisfying.

A: Well let me give you just an example.

Q: Please.

A: I didn't have a great deal to do with this, but one commencement, and she's still around by the way, we had a blind girl on campus who got her undergraduate degree from us and she had a seeing eye dog.

Q: Was she in Earth Science?

A: She may have been. Large kind of ...

Q: Golden Retriever?

A: Right.

Q: I remember her.

A: And during commencement when she walked across the stage the dog walked across with her wearing a mortarboard.

Q: Beautiful story.

A: It really was, you really felt that the university had done something for her. Here was someone who was very obviously disadvantaged in a lot of different ways and we provided her maybe with an avenue for doing something with her life that she would never have had otherwise. This kind of, I don't know, kind of makes you feel good.

Q: You have brought up a subject I've never even thought of and no one else has addressed it so before we get off I want to come back to commencement. Do you have any feeling, would you care to comment on to what extent all of the fuss and feathers and money we go to for commencement has had upon not so much the students and the faculty but on the parents, and spouses, and children, and all that attend.

A: Oh yes. One of the jobs that for some reason I have always had at commencement is to deal with the late arrivals and what that means is that I'm out there with all of the parents.

Q: Yes.

A: And I can hear the comments of the parents. And all you have to do is see a family stand up and applaud as their child goes across stage and gets a degree and you can see the pride in the family and when you realize that the tradition around here is that, who knows maybe seventy, eighty percent of our graduates are first in the family. You can see where it does make a tremendous difference to the family. It's the one time more than any other I think when the family can, I don't know if identify, appreciate what's the right word to use, but, I think you probably get more affection expressed for SIU from the family then than at any other time in the years that the student has attended. They kind of get the feeling that maybe there have been some things wrong, that the university has hassled them a little occasionally, but then it's all been worth it at that point and time.

Q: This is valuable to note. Obviously Les Farrar agrees that the fuss and feathers and dollars has been worth it....

A: I think so.

Q: ...that were devoted to commencement. Well that's important to record. I am certainly glad that we somehow got off onto that.

A: I think the important thing to remember in terms of dollars is that commencement is a P.R. campaign just as much as if you put a TV ad on or an ad in a magazine. And Delytet Morris always used to maintain commencement isn't for the graduates and it isn't for the faculty. It's for the parents. And if you approach it from that stand point, I think you build a lot of good will with it. I know that's maybe not a popular view around here but I've always kind of believed it.

Q: Well I've heard a lot of grumps about oh I've got to go to commencement, but I don't think anyone would disagree with you or Delyte Morris that it is for the folks. And they do pay taxes. And they have younger people that they may send. And as I like to say, Les, who knows it may be all worth it. One of them may take a course in history.

A: That's exactly right. That's exactly right. No, you can see that when you have commencement at nine o'clock on a Saturday morning and you'll have somebody who has driven up from Little Rock, Arkansas

to see a grandson or a granddaughter graduate. And that's a mean drive even if they stay overnight. That's a really significant, conscious effort that they've made to share in that celebration.

Q: A moment ago you, in relation to commencement, you mentioned this inspiring young lady who was blind. I have another prepared question. Were you involved with any special academic programs or in your case administrative programs directly to the educationally deprived? If so, please comment.

A: I was on a committee several years back. Oh my lord it's been I don't know how many years back. It was when Chuck Moorlegan was still alive and still working for the university and that's been many years ago. And it dealt with making the university accessible to the disabled. I don't remember the name of the committee and I really don't remember much about it anymore, but we were one of the earliest universities in this whole area to look into that aspect. And even though we didn't do, by today's standards, what would be written off as a superb job, in those days it was a magnificent effort. There were some comments that were made that weren't all that kind about the disabled from some of the people and there were some decisions made by the university that were well intentioned but not very bright.

The handrail on Building II where the slope goes down was initially put in so close to the building that to use it anyone in a wheelchair scraped his knuckles and that sort of thing. But in those days you simply learned by doing and we had to make improvements.

And I guess the other thing that I had a very small part in, but I was pleased at the attitude of the university was at the beginning of this last academic year in 1990 we learned that we were going to have something like twenty-five wheelchair students on campus and we had really nothing to provide them with writing space in the classrooms. And Jane Dabbs, Disabled Student Advisor, and I sent a memo to David Werner and suggested that somehow we ought to buy some fifty tables. That's about two tables per student because you put them in the classroom in advance and that way you don't have to move them and worry about Physical Plant being unable to respond as immediately as you'd like or something because the tables are right there already.

And the Provost came through; I don't know where he came up with the money, you know what the budget is around here this year and it was about four thousand dollars worth of tables that we bought. You've seen them in classrooms, the blue ones.

Q: Yes. Now I know the story behind those blue tables that were all of the sudden in my classroom.

A: That's the story.

Q: When you look at this campus you see some kind of significant effort has been made with ramps and lifts and lavatory doors and in many unintrusive ways that we have tried to respond to the need of the disabled. They even have an organization. I know the name. I've forgotten it. I see them out here in the lobby with the bake sales.

A: There are two kinds of problems in dealing with the disabled. One is recognizing a problem and solving it when you can come up with the money to do it. Those two things don't always work together. And another thing is that we discovered that often some disabled students won't even complain because they become so accustomed to not having facilities that they really are not surprised by the lack when they get here; so we don't know about it.

I would have to say that the university has always tried to deal with that problem, whenever it's been brought to the university's attention; we haven't always done it right and we always haven't done it as fast as we should. We have always tried.

Q: This elevator shaft you see out my window was very expensive since it was an add on. That is a symbol of what we are talking about. It is of course conceivable that a building this big only originally had one elevator. You talk about foresight or lack of it. Three buildings tied together with one elevator and when it goes out the handicapped students don't go anywhere. It's been very serious.

A: Let me give you an example of an argument that I had for years with the administration. You will remember yourself that the Department of History alone used to have three 50 seat classrooms on the first floor of the Peck building and we put an advisement unit in it and I fought that creation for a number of years. And I did so because I didn't think we could stand to lose the classrooms in the first place. But the elevator was the other problem. If the elevator went out and it did on occasion and you had a wheel chair student who had a class on the third floor, our only option was to

move the class to the first floor of the Peck building. If you take all the classrooms away, what do we do with that student? So I fought it but lost.

Q: One previous Provost slowly took every classroom on the first floor of Peck for administrative offices and we have been disadvantaged to that extent along the lines you were just mentioning. We used to have classrooms that would hold 200 students. They are all gone for example. Perhaps necessary, but even so an unfortunate use of the classrooms on the first floor of Peck.

Les talk about your greatest frustrations here going into your fourth decade.

A: I think the greatest frustrations are in knowing of a problem, knowing that a certain problem might exist, and not being able to deal with it successfully for one reason or another. The reason for not being able to deal with it could be a variety of things, a lack of equipment or a lack of space or just plain a lack of cooperation. And I have to say that sometimes we have faculty who aren't as cooperative as they might be. My only point in saying that is that the lack of cooperation doesn't all stem from the administration, from third floor Rendlemen.

I've had faculty members who might have a 50 size class in a 200 size room and then I have had quite the reverse: a faculty member with a 200 size class in a 50 size room and to me the answer was obvious. They just switched rooms; but sometimes the individual who was in the oversized room wouldn't give it up.

So as far as I was concerned there were 150 students that were being injured to some extent by this one faculty member who insisted that that would be the room he or she was going to teach.

There are good things that happen and bad things that happen and when I say that faculty had been involved here it's always been a minority. As a rule we have had a wonderful faculty around here who have always been cooperative. But in terms of frustration there are a few just like there are a few administrators.

Physical Plant is the same in a kind of way a frustration simply because they can't always respond as rapidly to something as you want that you need to have done in a classroom.

Q: You have opened a door that I think is significant and perhaps you can comment a bit more and that is the overall relationship between the faculty and administration.

A: Well I don't know how it is at the third floor level. I can only comment about it at my level.

Q: From your experience, obviously.

A: And as a general rule of thumb I think that our relationship--at least as I tried to operate to achieve this goal--has always been a mutually cooperative one. On very, very few instances have I encountered a faculty member who was so self centered that he or she won't cooperate just because they didn't want to cooperate. If I want to trade a classroom or something like that

and the faculty member declines chances are about 9 out of 10 that he or she has a perfectly legitimate and valid reason for needing the room that he or she is in.

Q: Such as the maps or equipment.

A: Exactly.

Q: Was that the case with this previous example that you mentioned about the 50 and the 200...

A: No. That was a case where the 50 size room was in one building and the 200 size room was in the other and the faculty member simply did not want to go from one building to another. That happens occasionally, but not all that often.

Q: Let's lighten it up a little bit with some humorous experiences funny, bizarre, strange, unusual over the years, Les.

A: We have had some really interesting people around here. We had one English prof. and I'm not sure whether it was a grad. assistant or just a term appointment lecturer, but this particular individual was pretty noteworthy back in the early '70s. He wore a black flowing cape and he looked nothing so much like Dracula floating from building to building.

We had another individual who worked here who was unfortunate the same way I'm unfortunate; we're about 900 pounds over weight and she to wore a rain cape of some sort and she drove a motorcycle. The

motorcycle was about 10 sizes too small for her and she wore one of these space type helmets. It was really a sight to see that particular individual driving in the parking lot. You would just see this cape and space helmet moving along. You couldn't even see the motorcycle.

I think one of my favorite stories, if you know the individual, Hollis White. We were having a senior citizen's day here when Hollis was Dean of Fine Arts and he was trying to go to lunch and the student assistant who was helping out in the Senior Citizen's Program insisted on carrying Hollis's tray to the tables and assisting him and just as if he were one of the other group rather than dean of the school. He took advantage of the situation. It's hard to think of some of the funny incidents. There have been so many that have happened over the years.

Q: Your worst memories here?

A: I really can't say that I have had anything that I would classify as worst memories. It's not all been peaches and cream. No argument there. There have been frustrations, but I can't really say that I have ever really had any situation that was so bad that made me want to walk out the door.

Q: I would think, Les, that in that terribly responsible job of allocating classrooms and hours and all you must have lost some sleep at night wondering if perhaps you put two classes in the same room at the same time or something like that.

A: Another worry that I have that continues even today is in terms of worst nightmare. That is the need to shut down the university during a snow emergency during final exams. Everything else is something that you can recover from because of time. You have time to fix it. But if it snows on the day of finals, there's no time. You are really stuck with a monumental problem.

And you try to anticipate, but you always have the problem of communication or getting the students to know that your shutting down and what the alternatives are going to be and so I do all kinds of Indian Sundances and what you have you during final weeks so we don't have that problem. We have had it on a couple of occasions.

Q: A midwestern ice storm is something to be feared and we had them.

A: One of the things that complicates that problem is, and this is strictly an observation and I'm not trying to sell semesters or anything (because I'm not sure it will improve even with semesters), one problem is that the quarter system really doesn't allow any recovery time. You have one week in between terms, essentially, and that's a vacation time (as it is between winter and spring) or a class time (for workshops as it is between spring and summer). You can't stand a shut down during final weeks, because you have no alternative time that's really good.

Q: How many times roughly has this happened in your experience?

A: During finals? About three. Curiously and this is kind of side comment but for years Ron Glossop had been advocating a free study day and the response was always that it couldn't be done because of the final exam schedule.

END OF SIDE 1

And for about three consecutive winter terms just coincidentally we had a snow shut down and we had to compress our five day exam period into four days. We had no choice and as it turned out we found out we could do it and it wouldn't hurt anybody and of course Ron was delighted. And the objections to free study day evaporated and we had a free study day as a result of the bad weather.

Q: What a fascinating story.

A: It also shows what persistence will do. Ron kept at it until he got what he wanted.

Q: If I'm not mistaken Ron, "mondialized" our university with the united nations flag on campus. Great guy.

A: I think so. He's also primarily responsible for interdisciplinary studies. He was the big push behind that.

Q: What would you like to record that might never make it in an official history of SIU?

A: That's hard to think of something. I know what an official history would include.

Q: You know behind the scenes, back stairs. Less than dignified. How about schenanigans for example that students have tried in your various capacities or faculty for that matter.

A: I guess I learned the ... When I was enrollment officer I learned that not even nuns are immune from lying.

This is another frustrating thing and I guess it relates to this story. But the one thing students have never been able to understand it's the reason for the registration appointment; it's like the check out counter in a K-Mart store or a Schunucks or something. What you have is simply a long line of people waiting to check out, i.e. register. You don't have that many cashiers so you substitute for the cashiers by having different days; and when you want to register before your appointment what you in fact do is try to crash the line at the K-Mart store. And I think everybody knows how aggravating that can be when someone tries to bust in front of you when you're trying to check out. The students don't always see it that way.

And that was my experience with the nun. She came up with some story which I knew to be patently untrue about why she had to register before her time and I guess I was just so shocked that I let her do it.

I think that I proved the point best once with two elementary ed teachers, grad students. Insofar as registration or rules of registration are concerned, they probably are the worst. Grad students consider themselves something extraordinarily special and

above certainly any common ordinary rules that apply to freshmen. In this particular instance these two ladies just wanted to go through the line and they just absolutely had to have this particular course. And I argued with them for a while about crashing the line and everything and it didn't make a bit of dent. I explained to them why I didn't want them to register. And then when I found out what course they wanted I looked it up and I decided I was going to let them do it just to prove a point.

Now the two of them who wanted the same class because they were driving together, but I also knew that there was only one slot left in the class. So when the one got up to register I put her in the class and when the other one stepped up to the counter and I said I am sorry the class is now closed. And immediately they began to debate, as to well you take the spot, no you take the spot, you need the course more than I do. I don't think I ever convinced them that what I was doing was trying to show them why we tried to keep registration appointments.

I know this is a problem enrollment has now. The line looks empty at times and people have difficulty understanding why you don't allow students to register earlier than their appointment, but if there is one consistent complaint that I have with every level of administration at this institution it's this...that almost invariably it's the squeaky wheel that gets the grease and the guy that I feel sorry for is, and this is how the registration appointment ties in, is that poor stupid slob that believes his registration appointment for next week has to be kept next week. But if you want to come in and plead your case to enough people, the higher up the ladder you go the more probability exists that you're going to get a yes answer.

The only thing that happens is that while you taking care of this one special case you'er doing a terrible disservice to that poor guy who is coming next week. You may be taking the class that he thinks he is going to be able to get and wants and so forth.

And so that's one of the objections I have: if we are going to have a rule, then keep it and back up the people who are trying to enforce it in the front lines.

Oh, I have had all kinds of people come in. We had one individual who came in and was totally smashed out of his gourd and wanted to register and threw 16 different kinds of a fit before we finally discovered that he really wanted to register at Rankin; not only did he not know what time of day it was yet but he had the wrong school. That happens on occasion.

In one instance Dorrie Wilton had this example of a wife who called up and wanted to get a hold of her husband in an emergency. I don't know how genuine the emergency was, maybe it was nothing more than picking up a loaf of bread on the way home, but, at any rate, Dorrie looked up the student's records and said that we don't have anybody by that name registered this term. The woman said you must have; every Tuesday and Thursday night he picks up his books and leaves. Well that leaves all kinds of speculations. But we have had situations like that.

Q: What would you like to put on the record that we haven't that I haven't brought up. Just in general you might have something you might like to add to any category we have discussed.

A: I can't really think of much of anything other than this, I guess, sounds like the party line but I think you know me well enough to know that it's just the way I feel about things. At my age and career I'm not going to be able to brown up to anybody. There's no point in it. We have made our mistakes over the years but in general I think the university has done a pretty doggone good job.

I think we have turned out a lot of good people. I think we have been generally responsible to the area and considering the fact that for many many years, and you know this as well as I do and to some extent we still are, we have been a step-child of Carbondale when it comes to money and equipment and everything else. Given the handicaps we have worked under I think we have done a remarkable job and I am kind of glad that I was around for it to happen. I think I may have felt a greater degree of personal satisfaction when we were small and you knew everybody and saw everybody. I mean there are people now that are nothing but telephone voices or that you may see once a year or something like that. I think as we succeed and grow larger you lose a little identity and we become more a part of the bureaucracy. But as a general rule I think we have done a pretty good job.

Q: Well that's one reason I'm still here. I think that's quite prevalent throughout campus especially for those of us who have stayed around. Les, if I could interview only two more people which is of course a hypothetical question, but for the record if I could only interview two more who would you suggest?

A: One you have probably interviewed already or are going to I would suggest Dorrie Wilton.

Q: Next week.

A: And another would be Bill Going.

Q: I wrote Bill Going. Let's get two more.

A: Okay. I am trying to think of somebody who is still around and by around I don't necessarily mean here in the university but just around period. There have been so many people Have you contacted Bill Bennowitz? Bill's an old pioneer.

Q: Keep thinking.

A: I'm sure you have thought of Jerry Runkel.

Q: Yes.

A: Okay.

Q: I could conceivably interview 375 people. Faculty, administrators, staff, civil servants, who served before '65. Well obviously it would be my life work to interview 375 so that figure had to be cut obviously considerably. My target group well then that

could be reduced to 128 which is still quite a bit. The bulls eye is 49 and after I interview as many of those 49 the administration will have to decide what else to do.

A: Do you have David Rands down by the way? He is another old East St. Louisian.

Q: He is down. He's not among my target group. Perhaps he should be, but I had to try and get a balance of schools, departments, staff, faculty and that's dictated who...

A: Do you want some students?

Q: A few past students like Eugene Redmon?

A: I have no idea whether he would be available to do it, but you might think about Bruce Cook. Bruce Cook may be the most prominent attorney in St. Clair County and he is an old SIU graduate from about 1963-64 or something like that.

Q: So far I have only considered students who later came aboard. Well, Les, thanks for coming by. I appreciate your time.

A: I was glad to do it.

Q: And your candidness.

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