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SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer 1990-91

Arthur Grist Interview, May 2, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: GRIST. 502

Q: Professor Arthur Grist thanks for dropping by my office on this second day of May, 1991. Art why did you come to SIUE in the first place? You came here in September of 1961 from Cleveland.

A: Well at that time I was working as an adult educator with the Cleveland Division of Health, basically in community education and environmental sanitation. Cleveland was having some hard problems in housing and some tenement housing and fires. SIU sponsored a conference in East St. Louis on municipal housing and some possibilities for action. The department sent me.

It was a week long conference. I participated in some of the debating and discussions and about Wednesday of that week the Director of the East St. Louis Center made me a job offer, that was in June, and we negotiated. They made me an offer in August and I came in September of '61.

Q: Was it like we say an offer you couldn't refuse?

A: Yes. It was a 50% increase in my salary. I was fresh out of graduate school, bottom of the totem pole and with nowhere basically to go in the municipal political system.

Q: Where did you start work here?

A: I started work at the Carbondale campus, but was assigned to the East St. Louis Center as a Community Consultant with approximately 5 or 6 other Community Consultants out of Carbondale. We were basically Carbondale people stationed in East St. Louis.

Q: Where did you live?

A: I lived in East St. Louis. First on 18th Street then on St. Louis Avenue for three years and then out by Gramerise and Marks State Park for three years and then moved to Edwardsville in '65.

Q: Now for the record, walk us through your various positions over the past 30 years here.

A: Starting in 1961 as a Community Consultant with the Community Development Services of the Area Services Division at Carbondale. Part of the SIU charter provide is to area services. I remained a Community Consultant from 1961 to 1965 whereupon they reorganized the campus as you know and created several Vice-Presidents. Howard Davis, now deceased, decided to step down as assistant to Ralph Ruffner, Vice-president of Student and Area Services. I had been offered a job in St. Louis in thef Model City Program. I met the Vice-president who told me that he needed an assistant and would I be willing to fill the job. So I started out as an assistant to the Vice-president in 1965.

Q: Ralph Ruffner?

A: Ralph Ruffner. Who was the Vice-president for Student and Area Services.

For about approximately a year I served as the assistant to the vice-president in Student and Area Services and after that I got elevated to Special Assistant of the Vice-president of Student and Area Services. It was like a probationary period and I was the same level as Bruce Thomas and Larry McAneny and all of those.

I was elevated to the same status to the vice-president and all the rest of those folks. Before then I was like the low man on the totem pole. So I stayed there with Ruffner, basically I was running the vice-president's office here for McVickar, Rendleman, and Ruffner. Over in the old house that is now security. I handled all budget and personnel.

Basically all personnel for Carbondale and Edwardsville for Student and Area Services programs, Dean of Student's office, Area Services, Seymour Mann's shop, and Community Development. All international programs, all the personnel transactions had to come through me, and then I handled the budget for the vice-president for this campus for all the programs here.

So, let's see I stayed there until '70 I guess that's when they went to chancellors and then I was still a Special Assistant to the vice-president, but it was International Area Services. So let's see, I stayed there until they further decentralized the campus. I think Ruffner started to work for Andrew Kochman or somebody, and then Rendleman offered me the job of Director of the East St. Louis campus on or about November, '70 I think, give or take a month or two.

So I became the Director of Operations of East St. Louis campus from April of '70 till November of '76 and also served as the Assistant to the President. I had two titles. Director of Operations, Assistant to the President, and Assistant Professor. I became an assistant professor in about 1968. I stayed there until Rendleman died, and then Kochman took over so I came back to the campus when Kochman wasn't selected as president and I became assistant to the acting president Ruffner for approximately a year. Then upon advent of, what's his name, Ken "Buzz" Shaw as president, I remained assistant to the president for another year. Then I was transferred about '77 or '78, give or take a month, as special assistant to Ria Frijhter, Vice-president for Business Affairs. Let's see stayed there until Panos Kokoropoulos thought the university ought to be reorganized, and they did away with all of these positions. In 1979 I went over to full-time teaching in Health Recreation and Physical Education and that's where I have been since.

Q: That is as varied a back ground as I have run into. And I may not run into anybody else who has had your experience in every facet of administration plus full time teaching in the School of Education.

Q: Why have you stayed here for 31 years?

A: Well I felt this university was initially innovative and creative. I liked the Morris concept. Fortunately enough, early on, when I first came to the university I had a chance to mingle with the Board of Trustees. I had a chance to meet Delyte Morris because somehow I got my self intricately involved in the inter-workings of

East St. Louis politics, and so by virtue of sticking my nose out and getting in trouble a couple of times I had to meet with lawyers and some other board members who were pretty tough people.

And though Morris basically articulated what he thought this campus and this university ought to be about, some of the kinds of things that I was doing in Cleveland allowed me tremendous opportunities to do quite a few things. Basically, I just felt that this was non-traditional, but traditional and there was nothing this university could not do, pursue, or undertake. And if it didn't work, it was just phased, out but if it did work they would go ahead and implement it.

So there were lots of all kinds of titles for different kinds of things and people were pretty well given carte blanche to go ahead and pursue just about every endeavor they wanted to think about whether it was international, national, world, global the who Buckminster thing, you know things that couldn't be done. At Carbondale people were told come to Edwardsville and do it. So it was just nothing that you couldn't do if you could package it, justify it, and come up with a rationale you could do it.

Q: You felt you were allowed to and permitted to and given to and
(mixed voices)

A: Encouraged to.

Q: And encouraged to do it.

A: Yes.

Q: I'm sure must have been very satisfying to you.

A: Oh, yeh. Yeh it was. It was almost disasterous.

Q: You work was...

A: Almost disasterous. You got so involved in your work that sometimes you tended to neglect other things. I had to keep a balance between home and work and all of these other kinds of pursuits. You know you really go get carried away with it. It's like research, it gets to be your life.

Q: I have had a few others, Dorrie Wilton, for example he was telling me he used to work 60, 70, 80 hours a week.

A: Yes.

Q: But he didn't mind because he was building.

A: Sure, right.

Q: I suppose I could say somewhat the same thing from my point of view. What of all the things you have done which activities, which contributions have given you the greatest pleasure?

A: Well, probably being allowed to work in the field of health. Part of my assignment with Rendleman and McVickar and a number of other people. There were always demands made on the university for people to serve in various capacities.

The three things I was involved in intricately were a lot of regional health planning the whole area wide health system and and planning to help establish hospitals, health centers, community health centers, and mental health centers. I was intricately involved in the first inter-state air pollution study as a city representative appointed by the university to help study the air pollution problems in the St. Louis Metropolitan area and help get the first study going. It's still one of the landmark regional planning. It's the forerunner of the Clean Air Act that we have today.

The other most satisfying thing was being involved in a Childhood Lead Poisoning Council. The same metropolitan area dealings with childhood lead poisoning primarily because of my environmental background. Primarily dealing with the serious educational problem, that is lead interferes with actual learning abilities. We were looking at learning disabilities in children and what was really physical and environmental. Those are the three most satisfying, mostly the health pursuits that I was involved in and some of the off shoots.

While I helped a lot with the Model City Program in East St. Louis and some other areas, it tended to get muddled up. A great satisfaction of writing it and help getting it started but not too much in terms of a final outcome. A lot of money was wasted in all the efforts put forth in those days.

Q: Now you obviously are a specialist in health affairs.

A: Yes.

Q: Obviously a big dimension of student services is health.

A: Yeh, right.

Q: Apparently you also were concerned over area health matters.

A: Yeh.

Q: Your several bosses were Ruffner, McVickar, and Rendleman,

A: (mixed voices) And Morris. I worked for Morris.

Q: And Morris is it fair to say that they knew of, appreciated, and took advantage of your...

A: (mixed voices) Yes, yes, yes.

Q: Health expertise?

A: I was like the TV character "Palladin," "Have card will travel." I have been to every far corner of the state of Illinois. I have been in parts of Illinois I didn't know existed. They have sent me to Dixon Springs, Galaconda; I have been to Cairo and as far north as Freeport. I have even had requests from governors. I

worked for the governor of that had the scared face, Ogilvee. Paul Simon had me in the middle of Aspirz Puerto Rican controversy right in the heart of Chicago. Where I didn't even know where I was. I have been on Indian reservations in the southwest. I have been all over this country. As a result of these travels they said, we got a guy who can do this.

Q: We have a health expert.

A: We have a health expert.

Q: That must have been very satisfying to have your particular expertise so appreciated.

A: Yeh, but my wife didn't appreciate it. Gone

Q: Away to much.

A: I was gone way too much. At the same time I was in the reserves and that took a lot of time. Two weekends a month on reserves and another weekend with the university. And when are you going to spend time with your family?

Q: You are a bird colonel in which reserves?

A: In the Army Medical Service Corps.

Q: So once again it's your health expertise.

A: Yes. I was an Environmental Science Officer in the U.S. Army Surgeon General's Office Quality Health branch.

Q: Well we're lucky to have you Art. That's very impressive. Would you care to share some opinions, feelings, observations on the high level administrators that you have worked with for perhaps 20 years. None of these men are on campus anymore. One of them, Rendleman, isn't on this planet anymore but I think McVickar, Ruffner, and Shaw are.

A: Around. Yeh.

Q: Well share with us some personal, intimate observations and experiences that you had with these men. I think each one of them in themselves were unique.

A: I think Morris put together a pretty good management administrative team. As you probably know, Morris brought in a lot of ex-presidents and ex-deans from a lot of other institutions that may have stepped on somebody's feelings or hurt somebody or were moving too fast. He basically brought them here and put them in institutes at Carbondale. Charles Pullye was his senior advisor. John King was down there and there were other people like that that I was exposed to and I was fortunate to sit down in a staff meetings and work with.

But McVickar was the premier scientist, the premier scholar and he was a task master for excellence. But he was also very sensitive to the university's need to serve and he was very much a

pusher and I was pushing him a lot. He fully understood the need for medical and health scientist in southern Illinois. And we needed to tie the two together. So he was very much pushing and looking for people for ideas in that area. He had rather some strange nuances that used to upset us a lot of times. For lunch he'd have broth and maybe for breakfast bran cereal. He was way ahead of his times, 20 years, in terms of nutrition and we always used to wonder whether or not he would survive the day on what he imbibed.

He was very demanding, but at the same time he allowed his people to function. But if somebody purported to be a scholar and purported to be doing research and purported to be up in their field he would not hesitate to totally embarrass him. Just eat them up and down and tell them basically don't cross my path again unless you really purport to be what you claim to be.

And unfortunately because I worked close by, I had to sometimes hear some of this and he would start schreeching and screaming. I'd have to get up and close my door because I didn't want to see who it was and I didn't want them to see that I saw them.

Rendleman was, of course, the fix it, mix it, do it, get it done man. Wheeler dealer. I don't think I knew anybody better in terms of wheeling and dealing. The Board, and McVickar, and Morris and everybody needed that kind of person in terms of the growth and the power plays that were going on between U of I and all of the other new emerging universities. Since he had Paul Powell and they had this north the Chicago Daily kind of hook up, the university was a benefactor.

He would basically prime Morris to go do certain kinds of things. He would set it up and Morris would come in and make the kill. And they were a great team in terms of all kinds of things going on. A lot you could never talk about because some of it borders on shakey ground. Not corrupt, but maybe not what university people would condone. I don't think we would have gotten a number of these buildings and a lot of other things that we have on this campus today if some of those deals had not been made.

Ruffner was what I guess what you would call a gentleman's gentleman. Ruffner had been in the federal bureaucracy and worked with the Russians in UNESCO. He'd been involved in a lot of the international, not intrigue, but international educational kinds of things and working with the United Nations kinds of activities and a lot of the state department people. He brought another dimension in terms of the whole federal hook up and bringing all of that AID money we got all those years. So we had quite a team.

Then there was I. Clark Davis. Each one of the top people had alter ego staff people.

Now Bruce Thomas as everybody may or may not know was a Rendleman, but on a different side. Bruce Thomas was a wheeler and dealer and fixer on the academic side.

Bill Going, of course, you know was par excellence extreme, reserve, gentle, genteel scholar.

Q: The southern gentleman.

A: The southern gentleman personified. Jim Brown, Larry McAneny were, and later Jim Comer over in education. They were get the job done detailists. So they seemed to put together those kinds of

things. Then I was like the little rooky. Didn't know what was going on. Let's see who else, Rendleman of course, Bill Hutchins and Jim Metcalf and a bunch of other fellows at Carbondale who had knew the good ole southern Illinois way of doing things.

It was quite an interesting experience during those days because I spent three days at this campus and two days at Carbondale. So I would have to go to the only watering holes in the place, the Ramada Inn, the Holiday Inn and sit down with them and others. Eat lunch with them at the places they eat lunch and listen to all of the southern Illinois tales and deals. I didn't play golf, so I didn't usually end up going to the golf course, but I got enough of the other kinds of stuff. I guess you'd call me in those days the unofficial Afro-American, Black, or colored spokesman. I would go out into the Carbondale community and surrounding communities and talk to the Negro-colored leaders and see what they were thinking and come back and talk to the university and people about some of their programs and will they fly or those kinds of things. So I think it was a pretty good mix.

And staff meetings with these gentleman. Of course Morris would start at 7:00 in the morning and they were hilarious. Everybody was trying up onemanship, be a gentleman, but we'd get there about 6:30 in the morning getting ready and wondering where Morris would have us going. He would never tell us up front what the heck he wanted to talk about, so you had to come prepared for just about anything and everything. I met this gentleman Arnold Maramont who was on our Board Eventually I met Buckminster Fuller. I met somebody else from the Teakwood people, Catherine Dunham's brother-in-law. "I met this person at this international conference and I am bringing him here

and I expect you all to accommodate him. Now who wants him." So they would sit there at the table and they would pass this person around. And as staff people we'd try to duck because we would end up having to babysit them, find them a house, an apartment at Carbondale; you know accommodate them. Pick them up at the airport, they were always prima donnas. It was fun, but sometimes frustrating.

Q: You have mentioned wheeling and dealing and the southern Illinois way of doing things. Without getting into detail I think I hear you imply that if it hadn't been for this kind of leadership we wouldn't be what we are today.

A: Definitely.

Q: So in otherwards it took some unusual....

A: The right combination at the right time for the right job.

Q: That in a nut shell. But it was unusual

A: It wouldn't be possible today.

Q: Would not be possible today.

A: Not with the newspaper and all the other kinds of F.O.I stuff that you have. It just wouldn't be possible.

Because of one reason. Board of Trustee, Ben Gelman of Southern Illinois papers, used to cover the Board of Trustee's meetings at Carbondale. Board meetings were not public in the old days. I had the privilege of attending some of those and Ben Gelman would be there covering for the press but he was so, what's the word I'm looking for, enamoured with Southern Illinois University that everything he wrote was always positive. He was the best PR man Southern Illinois University Carbondale every had. He was the editor of the local newspaper, but he was a university PR man.

Q: Now of all of the administrators you have mentioned, one name has not come up and that was Harold See.

A: Oh, yea. I didn't know him.

Q: You mentioned that you went out to talk to the Black community. Now has this campus, have we been as good as we think we have been on on racial matters and discrimination? Twenty years ago, in the theater auditorium, John Rendleman stood up in a faculty meeting and said we needed more Black faces around here. Was he successful? Has it worked? What is your reaction to that comment and they way it has been played out?

A: Well I think yes, he was very successful. As I recall Emil Jason was given a carte blanche checkbook and he basically went out and raided southern minority universities, Black universities and basically stole some of the best, some of there good faculty away from them and brought them up here. And I think that you know that

has made a tremendous impact on the institution. I don't think that at this point in time we have ever been as quote "integrated" as we were for those 5 or 6 years earlier in terms of bringing in the faculty.

Of course what happens in any market system, in any free market system other people buy them if they are that good. But I think they did a lot to educate the area. Did a lot in terms of Morris' concept of bringing in the faculty, wanting them dispersed throughout the community so they can enhance the communities in which they lived. They served the university, and they served community areas as part of a whole educational upward mobility. What should I call it? A kind of a Community Development or Community Education Program through infusion of his faculty out there in the community to help relay fears and get people exposed to educated and cultured blacks and other minority people. Then maybe this would neutralize some of their misgivings or misconceptions or whatever.

I think early on there was a meaningful kind of concerns. I'm not sure today what the over all philosophy of the institution is, but in those days I think it was rather serious. Whether or not all the members of the higher administration were really opportunist or really dedicated I'm not going to question. I think McVickar was, I think John was an opportunist. He didn't care one way. He didn't care what you looked like as long as you got the job done. He didn't care whether you were wishy-washy, whatever you call it today, or if you had different sexual orientation. If you could do the job, that's all he worried about. Ruffner was basically the same kind of way. He used to have some reservations, but he would give you the benefit of the doubt.

Q: Now a point blank question. Your my friend. Your personally experiences on race relations around here--good, bad, mixed?

A: Mine have been good. As you know I'm a pretty straight forward, tell it like it is kind of person. When I see, when I get examples of it I don't hesitate to report it. You know, my thing is if you fail to report it and if you fail to bring it to the person's attention whether it is overt or covert. Then you are just as guilty as they are for supporting it. I have always taken a position that whether it is in an administrative department, down in purchasing, I'm not picking on purchasing, they're my good friends over there, or in accounting or in the plant operations or wherever.

I would say the university, primarily John Rendleman or other folks have not exerted themselves in the area of union discrimination in the construction stream. They basically got intimidated by the big unions, and they backed down in terms of the crafts on campus and some of there contractors doing business on the campus. As I see it, it's a political trade off. We, John supported the whole highway construction thing and we were able to get a lot of minority people jobs. We even got a Fifth Circuit Court judgment on it. John Rendleman, John Flamer and myself to help work on these kinds of activities and I attended a couple of meetings in Washington. We even met with the governor on it.

So John went to Gov. Ogilvee, and Rendleman was right there with me, he and I flew up. The governor wanted to know what we were doing rocking the boat. And John read the riot act to him and told him if we don't do it now you are going to have blood in the

streets. And of course this is when Cairo was getting a little rough and things were happening in Chicago, East St. Louis and some other communities.

I think John was able to convince the governor the state needed to take an open-minded position on this whole problem. I guess people would call it now a quota system, but he was basically talking about fair share in terms of providing training opportunities for minorities and help them get into the whole field. So again that helped get a lot of things done on this campus.

A lot of men got into the unions, a lot of people were brought on what you call a "work permit" to help build a campus. We still don't have a whole bunch of minority craftsman on this campus, but they are working other places. Of course with the seniority system most of them could never get in here. They would have to wait about 40 years because most of the people come here and never leave.

Q: How would you assess our efforts in our work and our programs in the East St. Louis area?

A: I think initially during my involvement or early involvement in East St. Louis in '61 and through the East St. Louis center and even with the [Emil] Jason tenure, I thought we were beginning to do a lot of good things and getting involved. We were involved in the school district, we are involved in city government, we wrote the City Council manual, we helped train the new city government, we helped train the form of government down there, we helped train people in the school district.

We didn't have much luck in the county but we can't win them all. But as I see it now, we we're not doing, as far as I know, anything meaningful or significant in East St. Louis compared to what we used to, compared to the Katherine Dunham program, the East St. Louis center, and all of our involvement in a number of kind of things. Now we have things like an Urban League office in East St. Louis; and we have a chamber office and we have this visibly in our building but not in terms of our out reach into the community. We have a new mayor in East St. Louis. I don't know if anybody has even written and congratulated him. You know before when I was involved and other university people, Jason and others were were intricately involved in city government and in helping City Hall. We had Rudy Wilson and other people working in the school district. I don't know if we have those kinds of people there or not. I don't know.

Q: My wife and I went to the Viennese Ball last Saturday night and Mayor Gordon Bush was there. I went up and welcomed the major and chatted with him a moment.

A: He is one of our former students. He did his undergraduate and graduate work here. He went through the masters program in Urban Regional Planning.

Q: What have been some of your greatest frustrations over the past 30 years?

A: I would say with the advent and with the departure of Kenny Shaw.

Q: You were talking about Ruffner, McVickar, Morris, Rendleman and some how forget Shaw.

A: Andy Kochman for about six months or so was the so called acting president and, of course, Kochman had a tremendous reputation of being the windshield man. Whoever got to him first; he ruled by committee.

Q: What does windshield man mean?

A: Well, windmill. Whoever was in his office last that's the decision that you got. So, many people would try to be in it before you had to go to staff meeting, before the decision had to be made. You wanted to be the last one to talk to him because then that's the one that wins. If you talked to him at eight and somebody got to him at eleven your deal at eight may have gone sour on the same kind of issue. A lot of the deans called him the windmill man. Whoever blew the windmill last, pushed the blades, may have been the person who got the decision.

I wonder if there was a conspiracy among the deans that no way would he be the president because they could just couldn't see him as the president. It's unfortunate, because he was a hard working dedicated person. So he got zapped real good by the deans and it's kind of ironic because after that there was a whole era of zapping folks.

And then Kenny Shaw was basically Mr. P.R. I considered him an egomaniac. I mean he was all Kenny Shaw--made a lot of promises, talked a good game and he intended to do it, but I think he may have

been brought here under a false assumption. I think he really thought there was going to be great big things and then he ran into the budget problems and some other kinds of problems. I had limited contact with him. He kind of bought a pat hand, made a commitment to Earl, to the board that he would take care of Earl and that he would take care of Buck. Because somebody on the board was Buck's person, but he also wanted to bring his own person in, which was of Ria Friters.

He didn't know what to do in student affairs which eventually was run by Scully Stikes, who was in a black man out of control, I would call him. And Stikes had his own agenda. So here you have this strange combination. In the old days you had a good team working at the top level and now with the chancellor system it was just more complicated.

Shaw intended to do a lot of things, but the faculty just did not accept him. They saw him as superficial and shallow, and there was no way he was ever going to sell anything on this campus. Earl would have to do it. So Shaw became an external president, and he really could not function and I guess that's why they kicked him upstairs because he was considered an [in]effective president.

Q: And then he went on to Wisconsin.

A: Wisconsin. Nice.

Q: And now he is as Syracuse.

A: He is a great external man. He understands the outside kind of stuff. Don't get him involved in internal campus stuff because he will get you in trouble, but he is also astute enough to hire good people. He was astute enough to put Earl in there because Earl a person who could do the job and do it well, but Earl had plans of his own. I'm not sure how much Earl did it for Ken or did it for Earl and only those two would know.

I used to fight Jane Altes all of the time. She was on Earl's staff and she kept telling me what to do. And I said, but I work with the president, you work with the vice-president. You don't tell us what to do, we tell you what to do. And she didn't understand that. One day Earl-Shaw had to tell them. Hey you don't tell my staff what to do.

Q: Now let's go back to the question we were working on, your greatest frustrations over the years around here.

A: The demise of Area Services and Public Services. We missed our calling. Since we were chartered to serve southwestern Illinois we should continue to serve southwestern Illinois. But I think that given this country's trend toward urban-suburban and corridors it is sad that we are no longer training city planners, urbanologist. We got this Masters in Public Administration and Public Analysis, but we're not training community consultants or community educators or people to basically work in the community. We are not even training good urban educators.

Now we've got the research park, we got rugs, gruds, bugs. I talked about an urban education academy. We have communities struggling in planning, struggling in education, struggling in public works and I said why don't we set up an academy for school administrators. I said why don't we set up an SIU institute for training of school board members. Why don't we set up an SIU institute of training people who serve on city planning commissions, subdivisions, housings, and things like that.

I think you should mix both the academicians and the public. The academicians can do both. You can teach and you can also serve and do research and have lots of graduate students and other students out there doing a lot of the leg work. I think you can have both quality education and quality service to the area, and some how or another those kind of fell into a crack for about 7 or 8 years. We're now reinstituting them, not from the faculty, but from the top administrative level. If you look at the number and kinds of boards that the president and vice-president are serving on, this is nice but where does that leave our faculty? I have been a candidate for dean of students, candidate for physical vice-president for personnel, vice-president for public administration, and a couple other things and I use them as an opportunity because I learned from Kenny Shaw that you work in an institution sometimes to get the leader's attention you need to apply for some of the jobs. And each time I was always one of the two top candidates for the job. And on each occasion I took the time to meet with the president and the vice-president and basically tell them what I thought was wrong or right in what they proposed. In some instances many of the things I proposed to them were in fact implemented and done.

I had a long list of 20 things. Fifteen of those 20 things have been done by Earl Lazerson. I was not part of his clique because he wasn't happy with what I did as part of the conspiracy to get Kochman. I understand that. It's just politics. But we have continued to be amiable and social over the years even though he has cost me a sizable sum of money, but that's the way the game is played. I don't hold it against him, but I don't hesitate to tell him what he does wrong and he doesn't hesitate to seek me out asking my advice.

Q: If 15 of your 20 ideas have been implemented, that must be a very satisfying experience.

A: Now that was just in the personnel area. There were a whole lot of other things that I had concerns about, but he never gave me a chance to advise in those areas.

Q: What would you like to record that would most assuredly never make in a formal history of this university?

A: I would say that Southern Illinois University should go down in the records as being one of the great public service and community institutions of its time. It has made an impact on southern Illinois that has been documented over the years. I don't know if it has been documented in the last 10 or 15 years but there are instances after instances and case after case of all kinds of things

that did happen, would not have happened just by accident had we not been here and had we not had that whole concept of public and community service, and the push.

Q: So this university obviously in your opinion has made a significant contribution to the area.

We have talked about your administrative work primarily up to now. However, you have been teaching for 10, 11, 12 years full-time the last 10 or 12 years. Where you involved in any special academic programs directed to the educationally deprived?

A: When the Experiment of Higher Education was created in East St. Louis I was involved in the early development of the Head Start program which is now one of the premier programs in the country. I was one of the consultants. .

Q: One of the premier programs in the country?

A: Regan and Bush adopted it in terms of education. Head Start grew out of the war on poverty has been, and continues to be, one of the examples reaching the disadvantaged and deprived students. It's the only thing that's in all 50 states of this country.

Q: And we started it?

A: We were part of the team of people who helped set it up and initially get it started and we were part of one of the pilot programs in East St. Louis for it. Hyman Frankel was involved.

The other thing I was trying to remember was the Model Cities program that involved citizens and citizen board training. Again I was involved in some of that in going around training a lot of the board people and community people in term of looking at the university and I basically talked to all of our faculty here about various kinds of way to do adult education. I knew how to do it but to formalize it and basically set up the curriculum and the modules and those kinds of things I got a lot of the help and assistance from a lot of the faculty members.

Q: I heard you say rather eloquently in a half a dozen ways that this campus has been quite successful with our programs towards the educationally deprived.

A: Yes. Definitely.

Q: Good. I think, would you agree that this campus has a much better track record than most in the concern that we have for disabled students.

A: Yes, right.

Q: And the educationally deprived.

A: Right. We have been mainstreaming. We've been on the forefront of mainstreaming. The whole matter of I. Clark Davis and Carbondale in terms of being on the President's Council for the Disabled.

Basically designing this campus to be accessible long before other people even thought of it, before the law was even passed. We were accessible.

Q: Simple things like ramps.

A: Right, sure.

Q: And what would you call them, depression in curbs.

A: Curbs, right, yea. Curb cuts.

Q: What?

A: Curb cut.

Q: A curb cut. That's a nice expression thanks.

How has the East St. Louis area supported us, received us, appreciated us?

A: I think tremendously I think they whole heartily, welcomed us. I think all the true community leaders and truly concerned people, whether it's in the religious sector, educational sector, the social services, the state agencies, all of them even including the past major always have applauded us for our efforts and concerns. END
OF SIDE 1

No one has even been turned down by the university administration. They may have had their request channeled to somebody else, but they have always felt the university accessible, available and no where do I know anybody political or social or religious who ever said, and I'm down there all the time, that the university has failed to respond to there request no matter how big or how small. This is their university. They really think this is their university.

Q: You mentioned Major Carl Officer. He has complained about the university. I wrote an open letter to the editor once challenging him. The letter was never printed. Wyvetter Young, state representative, has she been as supportive as we deserved?

A: Yes and no. Wyvetter is a user. Wyvetter would like the university to be at her full time disposal. She's not wrong. Now you have to understand that we basically ran an office for Sam Vadalabene here. All that Wyvetter was asking was half of the kinds of administrative, research support available to her that we have made to Same Vadalabene in the past. We don't do that now as much as we did when we had Pete Simpson and others and basically a secretary working full time for Sam.

And I did the same thing for Kenny Hall. I basically said that if we are going to do it for Sam Vadalabene, I'm going to do it for Kenny Hall in East St. Louis and we did. I provided him with equipment, workers and staff in order to enhance his function because he would hurt us otherwise.

Q: Did Pete Simpson write speeches for Sam?

A: Yes. He was a speech writer for Sam.

Q: Now what would you, what would Art Griest like to say about anything, to add to the record?

A: Well only that if I had a chance to do it all over again I don't think I would want to go any place else.

I think the university has offered me and other minority people and controversial people the opportunity to be the best we could be and not tie our hands. Yes, sometimes some of us have stepped over the line and if we could justify it and had positive goals and objectives and it wasn't self serving I think we have been fully supported.

I think that probably at the end of my career now that we have been so locked into this efficiency and assesement mode I think we are going to strangle ourselves. You know that it's nice and desirable to use those as tools and guidelines but, we can go over board on that. It's nice to have that as a guideline and a tool, but to use it totally 100% I think is going to cause some of us in our retirement to wonder where is this great school we used to work for is going with this total pursuit.

We are still in a culturally deprived area, we're still in an economically deprived area, and we just don't have the schools and the feeder institutions feeding us quality students, and so we are

going to have to go back and tell the other people to send us a better product and then we can enhance that product and improve on it.

Q: Have our graduates that are now in the community public schools system sent us better students because they are there?

A: No. They have produced better students, but they're not coming here. Those students are getting better opportunities other places. Other places are skimming the cream off the top.

Q: With scholarship and grants.

A: Yes. Grants. Carbondale, Western, Eastern....

Q: Do they out spend us?

A: Yes they do.

Q: You are convinced that our graduates who have stayed in public teaching in this area have produced better students, too many of which are not coming here.

A: Right. This was a university of last resort. They would have preferred to go away, but they couldn't; however, they got a quality and outstanding education here, not because they came here for that, but because it was by accident that they came here and received it. But that has not translated into them saying, hey SIUE is a great

institution, to their better students, and I think you should go there. For whatever reason they're not involved or they don't feel committed, or we haven't asked them. I don't know which.

In the School of Education, I'm on the recruitment and retention task force for minority students, but I'm saying that our minority teacher and our minority students are going elsewhere. And there sending those kids elsewhere because they now can go to Vanderbilt, Baylor, can go to SMU. A lot of these outstanding schools basically treat them like athletes. Matter of fact some of them get better treatment than athletes because they are bright. And you know our alumni just aren't sending their kids here. I look at some of them in East St. Louis, where are there kids going? They are sending there kids to other places because they want them to get this experience. I think maybe because we are a commuter campus and you don't have this cultural interaction in the dormitories and that kind of thing may have hurt us, I don't know. Maybe some of the people out there don't realize that we have residence dorms available.

Q: You were saying that you feel as a minority person faculty yourself that you have had your opportunities and that a good many other minority people around here have had there opportunities and been treated fairly. What is your impression regarding the minority students? Have they been treated as fairly as the minority faculty have been treated?

A: I think they have been treated better than we have. They have been catered to and pampered and allowed to do things that other students were not allowed to, to their detriment. I think in some instances we have been too accommodating to them and not challenging them to the task.

One of the things that I have long discussed with Earl is that I don't mind an open door policy, but I do mind when a person comes into my junior level classes I expect them to have completed general education and be able to write, comprehend, and communicate at the junior level.

And I said I just don't appreciate the general education or general studies people sending, or the system allowing them, to enroll in junior level courses when they are not able to perform at a junior level. And a lot of the minority students have given me a bad time, because I do not appreciate their unpreparedness.

There's a language called English that we all speak here. You can talk ghettoese outside this room, but inside the confines of this classroom this is the language of use, of choice and many of them I send back to the writing clinic, to the reading clinic, to the computer lab and say go back over there, you got the ability, now go back and do it right this time. There's no reason why you can't, but somebody has allowed you to slip through and that's not fair. I said the first job interview you go on you're going to get washed out.

So what happens it's almost like that system 30 years ago where a lot of southerners came north got what I call shakey masters and doctorates degrees awarded by northern institutes, knowing fully well back 25 years ago that the only place they could work was in the south. I went to undergraduate school at Ohio State with some who

were chairs of the departments in southern schools. And one gentleman I know was in one of the Georgia schools or Mississippi schools he was chairman of the department of chemistry and I carried him through chemistry yet they awarded him a masters degree.

Q: I think that in your rather eloquent answer that not many people could make, as you could make it. You are saying among other things that we are doing minority no favor to go easy on them.

A: Right. Nope, nope. In the old days in the one room school houses in the south and other kinds of places, the minority schools. Teachers, black school teachers, negro school teachers in those days were task masters, they demanded, they pushed and they produced outstanding students in spite of the environment.

Now we give all kinds of excuses, the plaster in falling down. I say people learned in rooms where there wasn't any paint on the walls and they sat on wooden benches. We don't need to go back to that so don't use the environment for poor learning and poor teaching. We can still talk about the St. Louis school systems and other kinds of places, but even under the best circumstances what happens when a child comes out of University City. I asked him have you even been down south; I said you haven't even been in South St. Louis yet you talk like you come out of Mississippi and act like it. What kind of message, what are you telling me? They look at you like what's your problem.?

I said my problem is I can see you five years from now and you will have pushed a person out of a minimal job that that person may aspire to and that's the limit of what they can do, but because you

have the native skills you are doing a clerical sub-administrative job. You could be doing a higher level management job. But because you don't have the degree or the paper you'er down here at this level. And I said that's hurting us all.

Q: Two questions. If I could interview only two other people who?

A: On this campus or anywhere?

Q: Within 50 miles.

A: I. Clark Davis and Clarence Stephens.

Q: Well, Prof. Griest, my good friend Art, thank you. Not only I but future generations will appreciate your candidness.

END OF TAPE

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