

6-18-1991

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ORAL HISTORY

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Ray J. Kimball
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Date:

6/18/1991

Date of Accession:

SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer, 1990-91

David Luan Interview, June 18, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: LUAN.618

NOTE: Prof. Luan declined to do any editing of his own on this interview.

Q: Good morning, Professor David Luan of the Economics Department, the School of Business here at SIU. Thank you for dropping by on this Tuesday June 18 to share some of your memories about the years you've spent at this university. When did you come here anyway, David?

A: September 1960.

Q: Well you have been here over 30 years obviously.

A: That's right.

Q: I came a little before you in 1959. So the next question is why did you come to SIUE?

A: In 1959 I taught at Wisconsin, White Water, Wisconsin. Wisconsin State College. The weather was real cold down there particularly that year. The winters are really a snowy, snowy season. Almost from November until April. I just can't stand that weather.

Q: Yes.

A: I heard about this opening at Southern Illinois University at East St. Louis campus. It was a new campus. I like to think about building something more or less from very beginning. That's the opportunity at SIU at East St. Louis offered at that time.

Q: Were you born in China?

A: Yes.

Q: Where?

A: I'm born in Shantung.

Q: When did you come to the United States?

A: 1947.

Q: Shortly after World War II obviously.

A: That's right.

Q: And then you took a degree in economics from where?

A: First at the University of Denver, Colorado.

Q: When were you there?

A: From '47 to the summer of '48.

Q: Well, David, I was there at the same time. You were in the School of Business at DU?

A: That's right.

Q: Where did you work before you came here?

A: Well after I left DU I only have a masters degree. Then I went to Texas, University of Texas. I stayed there for '49, '50, '51. I ran out of money see. So I had to work see. I had to take a job see. Sometimes I would take one course a semester. You know this take longer, longer. I didn't complete until '58. Then I went to Bishop (sp unclear) College in Texas and taught there you see one year. Then I went to Wisconsin in '59. In 1960 I come here.

Q: How have you enjoyed your 30 years here? Are you glad you came?

A: . Indeed I am.

Q: David, what would you consider your most significant contributions over the 30 years you have worked here in the teaching in the School of Business in the Department of Economics? What do you feel best about having done?

A: That's real hard to say.

Q: Think about it.

A: That's real hard to... Well basically I suppose you know at East St. Louis teaching economics and statistics and we were a smaller class. Had more association with the students and you worked with young people really. You work with young people. You see they learn and you - I don't know whether you call this contribution or not see. To me teaching, help students learn see. It's a way of life really see. Even today see. Just sometimes before the test I give extra sessions on Saturday mornings see. To love students you see. They want more familiarity, familiarity with material you see.

Q: Then you would help them.

A: I help them.

Q: Before we go any further record for us the various positions you have held and what you have taught since 1960. You started out in East St. Louis teaching statistics.

A: Yeah.

Q: And then what happened?

A: Basic economics.

Q: Did you teach there until we came to Edwardsville?

A: Yes. That's true.

Q: And then you transferred out here.

A: That's right.

Q: And what have you taught since you have been here?

A: I'm still in these two area - economics and also statistics .

A: But during this 60... I think it's '66, '67, '68. This period. We have a new dean. We develop a new program see. In particular I was responsible to develop the section on quantitatives. Quantitative methods see.

Q: And you are now a Professor of Economics.

A: I am still teaching statistics both undergraduate as well as graduate course for MBA students.

Q: What has brought you the most happiness or satisfaction besides working with students.

A: Yeah.

Q: Are there other things that you have enjoyed?

A: My association with my colleagues see. In particular when I was at East St. Louis. You know lunch time everybody take a tray. We have faculty room down here see. We'd play a couple kinds of bridge after eat lunch. I thought that was the most enjoyable time (word unclear). (word unclear) I had in this university. Everybody knows everybody.

Q: What about your frustrations that you have had at this campus?

A: Well based upon what I feel that obviously in a large university impossible to know everybody really. All the people you have associated with mostly people close to you, same department see.

Q: Um-hmm.

A: Maybe same, in the same School see. Outside like have a bridge game with Jerry Runkle you know, Philosophy Department. These sort of things we don't have - very few occasions like that.

Q: Have you had some unpleasant things happen while you were here that you would care to record?

A: To me the university should be you know... People should do research, teaching see. Some of these politics can disturb people I guess. Disturb people and people often (word unclear) in small group. Small, organized, small group. I suppose by being in our society the democratic society, small group (word unclear) become big group or that sort of thing. It cannot be avoided see.

Q: Well now let me ask a very personal question, David.

A: Yeah.

Q: And you don't need to answer, but have you ever felt any discrimination?

A: Oh, of course. Well of course. Of course I feel that.

Q: Well I'm sorry to hear that.

A: I think that's part of society really. While I talk to you, - communicate with you, work with you I don't feel you are discriminating against me.

A: I'm playing cards with Jerry Runkle see. I associate with some other people down here. I don't feel they are discriminating against me.

Q: Would you care to record an example of where you felt you were discriminated against?

A: I don't know if I want to say that or not because I don't think...

Q: Were you promoted properly and fairly?

A: Well I have to say in a way it's not quite promoted properly see. Partly because they changed the standards. For them you and I come here. We got to teach everything there right. You cannot teach your specialty. Teaching different courses. You also have got to teach at different campus, not just one campus. At one time we have two campus is that right?

Q: At one time we had three. Alton, East St. Louis...

A: We had three. Yeah we had three. You see how much time it would take you down here. At least for us in the '60's the research was not emphasized, was not emphasized at all, not as far as I know. I suppose the important thing at that time was the service teaching. That's also important. Research was not emphasized.

Later on the school, you know, changes the criterion about it, about promotion. Research becomes important component see. Now for example let me see now... I think it be (word unclear) three courses all the time if I recall, taking three courses down there. Right now they hire new people to come in teaching one course. Another to research. From my point of view we didn't have that opportunity.

Q: You mentioned politics in the School of Business. From my point of view I suspect there's more politics in that School than any School. Would you agree?

A: I think there's a lot of politics down there?

Q: Yes. You mentioned a dean. Was that Dean Meyers (sp unclear)?

A: Dean Meyers. Yeah. I think he made some contributions to the University. He started this off-campus program at an air force base. Usually initially I was not teaching the off-campus. Later on I did teach off-campus see.

Q: From what you have said, David, do you feel that you have taught more than others and not been permitted to research as much?

A: I would say initially I think the first five, six years, they got to take in three courses. I remember pretty well. Don't you remember that?

Q: Yes.

A: You didn't have assigned time to do research.

Q: Um-hmm. And since then things have improved?

A: I think so.

Q: And now you are able to do teaching and research?

A: Yeah. Yeah.

Q: Now let me try another question about best memories as you look back over. You have mentioned teaching. You have mentioned bridge. You have mentioned your colleagues. Any other best memories that you have of your work around here that you would care to share with us?

A: I have to think about that if I can...

Q: All right.

A: I cannot say off hand, you know.

Q: Well while you're thinking about that let's come back to worst memories. Any other worst memories you would care to mention?

A: I think the worst thing that I ever had... When Meyers come in. Let's see. I was in charge of develop the quantitative methods also economics. I was hired in economics see. Quantitative methods later on separated out from economics. At the time they hired a new chairman of the Econ. Department, new chairman. I think that was '68 or '69. I forget his name now. I knew this fellow ten years ago see. As a matter of fact he was one of my professors of economics in Texas. He wants to be, you know, (word unclear) better economics department. At that time I was in two departments, economics and also quantitative methods you see. He tried to move me out of Econ. Department. He tried to do that. So you know I talked to Leo Cohen. Do you remember Leo Cohen?

Q: Yes.

A: He's in Econ. Department. I said, what do you think?. He said, where do you want to be?. He said he cannot move you unless you want him to. So I did not move. There was a new chairman of the Math and Science Department and he's not much good either so I did not want to move to a new department see. Since I did not move see... I suppose he try all kinds of things make my life miserable I guess but he didn't last too long either in the Econ. Department.

Q: Have any funny things happened around here?

A: Funny things happened. I don't recall any funny things happening here except East St. Louis. When we played cards all kinds of funny things happened I guess.

Q: All right. Now have you ever personally been involved with the relating the University to the community, to Edwardsville or Madison County? Have you worked with the communities around here very much in any way?

A: I didn't do much. Maybe a couple times I maybe give some sort of discussion to the church group I guess.

Q: Um-hmm. Have you ever advised somebody on economic matters or statistical matters off campus?

A: Yeah. I have... One time I was to serve as an extra witness to a discrimination case. Yeah. For a Chicago lawyer at Marion, Texas. No. Marion, Illinois. Yeah. Marion, Illinois. There's a federal penitentiary down there. One of the female physical education instructors you see... She paid much less (words unclear).

Q: Um-hmm. Did she win the case?

A: I think she did win the case.

Q: So you helped her. You helped her and the lawyer win their discrimination case.

A: Yeah.

Q: All right. Any other activities like that you wish to record?

A: I review several books for publication.

Q: Um-hmm.

A: One for McGraw Hill. Another for Central Michigan University that I remember. I think one time Carbondale asked me to evaluate Chinese economics book, ~ whether or not can be used as textbook. I looked over it. No. It can not be used.

Q: I seem to recall quite a few Chinese colleagues on campus. Do the Chinese faculty ever get together socially or professionally on campus?

A: Not very often. Socially not very often. Professionally because there is different professions, different academic areas, it's hard to say. You see the Chinese have a Chinese problem. For if you're from Taiwan... another from Mainland. I was born in the Mainland.

Q: Yes.

A: I visit Taiwan. One at Taiwan also come here. I would say we don't have much social gathering see.

Q: I see.

A: Not, not, not, not as close as... I don't know there were 50 people pretty close together or what.

Q: My experience was very much like yours. In the early days when there were fewer of us there was much more socializing. As we got bigger, we got less personal of course and fewer parties as we got bigger.

A: Yeah.

Q: That's one thing that I miss and I think you have made it clear several times that you enjoyed the closeness in East. St. Louis.

A: Yeah. That's right.

Q: Now have you ever worked with what we might call special education or with educationally deprived students or perhaps with foreign students, with different groups with different problems?

A: Well I serve as some sort of advisor to the Chinese student club.

Q: Oh. So there was or is a Chinese student club?

A: Yeah. We have Chinese student club here. I'm there advisor now.

Q: Oh.

A: I also an advisor early you know very early. You see I'm the first Chinese person should I say on this campus. I'm the only one. I'm the first one.

Q: That's interesting. Very interesting.

A: Nobody else had come. So whenever I have a Chinese student come in they usually come to our house because no Chinese live around here see. . If they have a problem they come out and talk to us. This probably last until maybe in the - even in the late - even late in decade '60's - early '70's. Our house was more or less center down there. And then there's some others come in.

Q: Well now that's very interesting and very important that you and your wife helped other Chinese people.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now obviously if you were the first Chinese faculty you are of course have the longest service...

A: Yeah.

Q: ...of any of the Chinese faculty on campus so your kind of the patriarch of the Chinese connection.

A: I'm the earliest one on this campus see.

Q: Now let me ask you a very direct question.

A: Yeah.

Q: What do you think of our exchange program with Hangzhou College? Have you participated in that?

A: Once have a lunch together with them. That's what I recall.

Q: Um-hmm.

A: And also the administration asked me have lunch or go to some kind of meeting or lunch when the Chinese Ambassador come here you see in very early time you know. Maybe in the early '80s, early '80s or maybe middle '80s. I'm not sure. Nineteen-eighties.

Q: Is it a good program, our exchange program? Do you think it is working well?

A: I suppose the... Well obviously the Chinese people benefit for that program see, but there is probably one thing wrong about this program because initially to come here, to learn, to go back there right. Well they're not going back maybe. The Chinese probably at home will not benefit the experience of learning from here see.

Q: Is one of the reasons that this exchange program is ending because too many students did not go back.

A: I don't exactly know. David Werner should know that.

Q: Um-hmm.

A: Should cancel that. He should know that. I'm only speculating.

Q: What kind of a contribution do you think this University has made to the community?

A: I should say there's plenty.

Q: Plenty?

A: Yeah. Plenty. I suppose ... I think there are lots of kids that were not able to go to college without this university down here. From economic point of view, the University down here helped the economy of southern Illinois, particularly Madison and St. Clair area. Even in terms of dollars and cents. Three of us. Initially three of us did an economic study.

Q: So it was Luan, Elliot, and Levin.

A: Yeah. Initially.

Q: Yes. I heard a great deal about that because I was in a car pool with Don Elliot and it did demonstrate what an enormous economic impact this university has had on the area.

A: That's right. I think that was the very...early edition and the second time see there were three other people. I was out see.

Q: All right.

A: I was out of that. That's you know I don't often complain. This thing I should have complained.

Q: Tell us about it. This obviously bothered you that you were not permitted to continue.

A: The University vice president office give contract to the Econ. Department see. Initially who wants to be. Who wants that particular project. I signed my name. Don Elliot signed his. Levin. The three of us. I was assigned collect data internally visiting different departments. Sports see and the sport department also. The different administration see. The unit. Collect data. Conference, what do you call it, conference... institute of conference, all of that.

I think initially that this is also time now see... I discover I have this heart problem. Slight heart problem. I was late by two weeks. I have the feeling see. They would rather have another person. I have this feeling. Maybe you, you talked with Don Elliot see on that. One time the chairperson, the chairperson you know,- the honcho - first honcho called meeting and three of us called meeting, (words unclear) then they canceled. I was there at the meeting. They canceled. Often times they had no meeting at all. I suppose partly because they think I didn't fulfill the deadline. Actually the deadline is more or less arbitrary deadline really. The deadline is 15th now. The 15th - the July the 15th deadline. Maybe June 30th dead line. I was late by two weeks to turn in information in July. Our report did not go out until October.

Q: Well.

A: I really think if I feel discriminated that's why I feel like that way. Whether indeed it true or not.

I'm not mad because things happen like that. I take something like this for granted. You know as a foreign born national, I feel that I discount myself. Discount in other words if I do 100 percent...let's say 100 percent good you see. If you just say I'm 90 percent good, I'd be satisfied. I'm no argument on that. I would not argue with that. That's the way I view things. If you say I'm 80, even less, I really (word unclear) feel badly.

Q: Now, David, on some of the other questions we have talked about, is there anything you would like to add that you didn't think of an hour ago say? What would you like to put on the record now that you've thought of while we've been talking here on any subject? Any of the questions I already asked you?

A: Yeah.

Q: You know good memories, happy, memories, humorous memories, things like that.

A: Well I'm happy that I'm in this country.

Q: Good.

A: I'm happy that I was able to get my education and then make use of my education in this country.

Q: How did you get over here?

A: You see the war ended in more or less '45-'44. And then the government - no the nationalists called me at that time. They know they needed people to reconstruction after the war. They set up a competitive examination to send people to foreign country to study. I was one of them passed competitive examination. Oh there are few thousand to participate to select about 200. I was one of them.

I was poor boy. I've been poor all the time. I'm not a landlord. I have some land. I have some land in Shantung ,but they are occupied by Japanese now.

Q: Um-hmm. Well then you came here.

A: Yeah.

Q: Now were you supposed to go back to China?

A: Yes. Well we don't have that sort of a restriction you know if there are no contract you must go back. I want to go back though.

Q: Yes.

A: After all I'm you know I'm familiar with the language and people. I can do more than here.

Q: Yes.

A: When the communists took over...

Q: Then you decided to stay here.

A: I decided not join the communism. Let's put it that way.

Q: Yes. I see. David, is there anything else you would like to

share with us as we draw to an end?

A: Maybe later on if there's something I can add it you.

Q: So thanks for coming by...

A: Thank you. Thank you. Yeah. Okay. Stop now? Stop?

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