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ORAL HISTORY

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SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer 1991

Herbert Rosenthal Interview April 23, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

FILENAME: Rosenth.423

Q: For the record I am interviewing Professor Herbert Rosenthal, past chair of the history department and many other administrative positions at SIUE. Now retired professor emeritus. It is April 23, 1991.

Now my dear friend and colleague of many many years now that we have the formalities out of the way, thanks for being part of this collecting of memories and reflections of the folks that built this university. I am going to start out with the standard opening question and that is, Herb, why did you come to SIUE in the first place?

A: I came to SIUE because jobs were hard to find in 1958 and I had just spent three years in Carbondale and they had a man in my field. So I was looking for a job and Academic Vice-president Tenny suggested I come up here and so I did.

Q: When was that?

A: 1958.

Q: Well that definitely makes you one of the old pioneers. I would like to come back to this later, about the difference between this campus and Carbondale, but lets carry on with this. And so your first assignment here was what?

A: To teach history. Especially American history.

Q: Now you also built the department didn't you? Recruited?

A: Yes. There were two history faculty members, Nedra Reames.

Q: Nedra Reames and Claire *Ja* Girard.

A: Claire was a carry over from Shurtleff. Nedra had been an assistant at Carbondale and she came up here in '57 when this campus complex was first established. There were two centers, one at East St. Louis and one in Alton. I went to the Alton center where Claire Girard was located. Nedra was established at the East St. Louis center.

Q: I mentioned recruitment because you recruited me.

A: Right. I don't remember how many I recruited. I guess the year you came Bob Erickson also came, but I don't think I recruited him. I think Jim Turner the head of the East St. Louis center did that. I was away for the summer.

Q: Well in this little walk down memory lane I would just like to mention that I flew in Lambert Airport, you met me, drove me to the Alton campus and I got the usual treatment and eventually signed a contract and came here August of '59.

Now the next fairly obvious question, the companion question, is why did you stay here so long?

A: I guess I got involved in administration and over the years I devoted a great deal of time to administration and my publishing suffered. I started off like a ball of fire, but then I just became involved in administration. I was hired as an assistant professor in '58, associate in '60, and full professor in '62.

Q: For the record Herb list the various administrative posts you had here.

A: When I first came D. Lovell was the head of the combined Social Sciences, but we separated in to two centers and so I was head of the Social Sciences in Alton, but then in 1960 it was decided to consolidate the two centers and they once again established a single head of Social Science and I was chosen to be the head.

Q: Was that called a Division Head?

A: Yes. Division head. They didn't have deans. I went on sabbatical early in 1962 and while I was on sabbatical Dean Going decided to go on sabbatical and I was asked to serve as acting Dean of Instruction and served for 6 months. I did not go back to the

division head post. I decided to return to teaching with all the best intention of publishing, but I became involved in a promoting faculty involvement in university affairs. And then in 1969, I became Graduate Dean of the combined campuses in '69-'70. That was a one year appointment to replace Bill Simeone who went on sabbatical in preparation for a return to teaching. Then in 1977, I became chairman of the History Department and served to '81 and I retired.

Q: Now I would like (telephone call) to talk to you and others about having come here from Carbondale. What was good about it, would you do it again, why did you never go back? Just share with us your feelings about your work on both campuses and perhaps explain why you elected to stay here and never go back.

A: Well on this campus I was much more heavily involved in helping to build the university. At Carbondale I was just a junior person, very very junior. I had a Ph.D. but for three years I was lecturer, so I was just temporary. At Edwardsville I was involved in the very beginning and it was then a very exciting process. Most of the people that were here were quite young. They had never had an opportunity to get involved so immediately in the academic process of the administration of a university. They would not have had the opportunity at a major university, but this was a young one so it was easy.

Q: Now there are some people who use the word animosity. It is a pretty strong word. Or ill feelings or lack of cooperation between the two campuses. You are one of the few people that I can interview that had been at both campuses. To what extent do you think there is misunderstanding, ill will and what generated it?

A: I think from the beginning this campus was required to adopt the courses and course structures that we had in Carbondale and it was only gradually that I think the campus developed a certain amount of independence. A lot of the animosity was on the higher administrative level. I never had any problems with the History Department at Carbondale.

I don't quite clearly remember all of the requirements. I think we were supposed to submit certain actions to the departments. But George Adams, then chairman, just let us go our own way. So as far as history was concerned there was no problem. Some of the higher administrators certainly wanted independence and resented the decisions of Delyte Morris. I am not quite clear about the controversy that led to Harold See's departure. I don't know all of the details.

Q: For the record Harold See was the one in charge of getting this campus going. I was interviewed by him and he really had ambition and dreams for this place and that is one of the reasons I came. Were you caught up in See's enthusiasm?

A: It is rather interesting. I became a friend of Harold See and late 1960 or early in 1961, soon after a new administrative structure was established for the STU complex in this area there was a confrontation between Harold See and Morris and the rumors began to spread about See's leaving.

Under the new structure the central academic administration went through the divisions. The Division Heads used to meet with the dean of instruction regularly. I'm not sure whether once a week or how often but during this See crisis, after one of the meetings, very early after the crisis developed all of the second rank administrators (that is the division heads and I guess advisors) assembled in my house. I had a house on Bluff Road and there was general agreement at that meeting (this was a private meeting) that we would back See in this crisis.

Q: One moment. Would you please explain the crisis?

A: I don't quite remember. There was a feeling that See was unjustly or inadvisably being fired at the whim of Delyte Morris and we all supported him. We were friends of See so we decided to come to his support. I think there were one or two exceptions of people who didn't want to go along. There was strong backing for See and that was it. I am not quite sure of the details. It seems to me the person that would be best informed about all of this would be Dean Going.

Q: Excellent. Let me bounce off you my version to see if it is remotely correct. I lived through all of this period. The version that I picked up was that See wanted to become independent, cut away

from Carbondale and Morris did not want that. See kept pushing and the persistent rumor is that one morning See came to his office and found out that the locks had all been changed and he couldn't even get into his office and then was kicked upstairs to some research position. Is there any truth to that story?

A: I can't vouch for that. I think there was a confrontation on the Board of Trustees and See probably over estimated the amount of support he had in the board of trustees. I really don't know.

Q: As I interview people I am hearing different versions. So I am no longer sure what happened. That's enough of that.

A: But let me say this.

Q: Please go on.

A: We all resented Morris' actions in some cases. Like the effort to do away with departments. He wanted us in divisions and I think most of the faculty, the traditionalists, wanted to be divided into departments. We resented the original name of our division. We were called the division of social studies which to most of us seemed like a name that you apply to a high school structure rather than to a university or college structure and we also had the name of historical studies for the department as history. I think that there were other names like philosophical studies.

It seemed like awkward terminology, so there was a certain amount of resentment. Morris realized this and soon after this crisis he came over to me and told me that he arranged to change the name from social studies to social sciences. I think I really floored him when I said I really didn't care. But I thought the faculty wanted social sciences, especially sociologists who thought of themselves as scientists. I think, looking back, that Morris was by far the best president we had. The most imaginative and the one who really pushed the university. I can't think of any who followed him who had his imagination and vigor. Now I haven't observed Lazerson too closely in these last ten years, but Morris really did a fairly good job in retrospect.

Q: Let me pick up on that and see if I can ask another question. To what extent do you feel this university evolved along the lines that you either hoped it would or thought it would when you came aboard particularly from your administrative duties.

A: I think it developed in accord with faculty wishes. I think that maybe it was part of the restraints on planning for construction and things like that that effected the development but to me one of the most significant things was that the first building that was opened in the university was the library and in the beginning years the library received tremendous amount of support.

One of my whimsical memories is that when I was acting dean, John Abbott came in to me with a budget. He had just been hired as librarian and I think he worked very hard on it. When he presented his budget request I chewed him out. I chewed him out, not because

he was asking for too much money, but because he was not asking for enough money. That was the attitude of the administration generally. I think Morris backed us freely on this as did Clarence Stevens, who succeeded See, so I feel that the university developed in accord with faculty wishes. The administrative structure remained the same. There was some question about whether we should have this division in to social sciences and humanities; some people wanted to have a college of liberal arts. But that didn't become a very major issue.

Q: Obviously you have been pleased with the way it has developed...

A: Up to a point.

Q: Up to a point. All right where might it have gone. What might we have done that we haven't done?

A: Speaking of the present, I think one of the biggest changes that had developed has been in reference to the library. The present library budget reflects a great change in academic priorities. By the way I can remember now one of the difficulties in reference to Carbondale and Edwardsville. We were not allowed to give master degrees originally. We had master students, but we had to, as I recall, go through Carbondale in awarding the degrees. We never had any problem in history. George Adams pretty much allowed us to do what we wanted. He was chairman of the history department.

Q: One of the prepared questions I have would be appropriate now. It is based upon your experience at SIUE. What contributions do you believe that the university has made to this area?

A: Well I think that it is very clearly provided an education or a possibility of an education for many people who would never gone to a university had SIUE not been here. It must be remembered that community colleges would not be established until well after SIUE was set up--about ten years after. Maybe it was in the early '70's. Up until then there were no opportunities here. There were in fact no opportunities in St. Louis for an education of moderate cost. A lot of St. Louis students came over here before UMSL was set up. So certainly that was a major contribution. I think SIUE played a very important role in 1960s in attempting to provide education for blacks in East St. Louis, especially in 1966-67. It was called the Experiment in Higher Education. It was set up really at the instigation of Hi Frankel who was on unpaid leave. He came back. I think it was after 6 years. He came back and helped set up this experiment.

I was involved in that for a year. It was an attempt to take graduates from East St. Louis high schools into the university and provide them with an education. That first year was rather exciting. I taught the American history survey. They had a wide variety of graduate assistants. Some had been convicts in prison; they came over very excitedly after the first hour exam and told me that for the first time some of the students stayed up all night studying for an exam. I was very very pleased about that. Some of them went on to graduate study, law school and that was a very good effort.

Q: Have we been successful in your opinion in addressing the education needs and desires of East St. Louis?

A: No. Not now. The establishment of the state community college really took the whole problem out of the hand of SIUE and the main focus came to be on community colleges. I think it might have been better, I'm not sure, if we had remained as the major educational provider in East St. Louis. There were some people at the very beginning that opposed a campus out in the cornfields. Jim Turner, as I recall, wanted to see this university established in East St. Louis. He felt that it would be a far better area. But I think that this is a good setting.

Q: I presume then that up until the establishment of the state college, you think we were addressing the needs of East St. Louis better?

A: Yes. Part of that came because it was funded by federal funds. We were able to provide scholarships for these students who were disadvantaged. They were encouraged.

Q: To what extent were you and your various administrative posts directly involved with the educationally deprived?

A: Particularly in East St. Louis?

Q: Particularly there.

A: Experiment in Higher Education mostly. I was there for one year and I know I remained an advisor to many of those students. They used to come in and talk to me. Otherwise there was no other special program in which I was involved.

Q: This leads somewhat naturally to another prepared question I have. That is what was some of your most significant contributions you made here over thirty years, nearly thirty years?

A: I think I would say helping to establish the social sciences as a major part of the university. My involvement in higher education and particularly my effort to bring about a greater faculty involvement in determining policy. I think one of my achievements was to maneuver the establishment of the faculty senate.

Originally, they set up a university senate to help establish policy. It included representatives from the faculty, student body and I think the administrative staff. I'm not sure when, but I think it was in the early '70's that I seized an opportunity in the university senate to make a point of order and to force a vote requiring the establishment of faculty senate which meant an independent faculty body. The faculty senate I think was a major development.

I was also heavily involved in the graduate school establishment. I served in the first combined graduate council and later on the commission that recommended the separation of the two graduate schools which came at the end of 1969-70. That was the year of the house crisis. That led to Delyte Morris losing all power. I

served in the graduate council for a long time. Most of my contributions have been in administration and pushing faculty rights.

Q: And, I might add, encouraging members of your department, such as me and helping finance my research and my aspirations. I will mention it if you won't. All I can say is thanks.

A very closely related question I'd like to ask is regarding your greatest satisfactions that you have had here since 1957?

A: I think the number of the former students who have become members of this faculty. Dicky Spurgeon, a former student of mine in Alton, became a member of the faculty. Barbara Laurence was a student of mine and she became a member of the faculty.

Satisfactions came in seeing some of my students go on. When I was in Taiwan there was a certain satisfaction in participating in a conference at which I and a former student of mine presented papers on the same panel. He had obtained a doctorate and was teaching at a college in Indiana and he was invited to this conference. He gave a paper and I gave a paper. I think there was a satisfaction in the success that the university achieves. A certain satisfaction in the conferences that I organized that were successful. Satisfactions with my relations with the faculty.

Q: I remember one conference in which you asked me to participate. I think you got a grant from the Illinois Humanities Council. My part was on ethnicity. I forget... what was the whole conference about?

A: That was local history.

Q: That is something that obviously we are both interested in and we have very important local history around here, especially French Colonial. To what extent has this university taken advantage of, worked with, cultivated local history?

A: When I was chairman of the History Department in '77 to '81 I tried to organize all the local history clubs and to develop a connection with the university. I had a large mailing list which was established and I had arranged a number of conferences. There was opposition from the State Historical Society because they felt I was trying to interfere with their operations. But there was a feeling a lot of local historians that this part of the state was not being given sufficient attention. The conferences that I arranged had that quite an extensive turn out of people interested in the local history. I was surprised. This didn't continue after I left.

Q: Were you involved in some effort we made towards a consortium of historical departments. I remember there was a luncheon on campus once.

A: I vaguely remember that but, I'm not clear. We tried to meet with the Belleville teachers. We tried to and we did meet with the historians of Scott AFB.

Q: We invited representatives from each of the junior colleges around. But regrettably there was not much if any follow through on that. It didn't go anywhere. Now, of course, we have established your contributions. You have addressed the questions of your satisfactions. Which brings us full circle to your greatest frustrations.

A: My greatest frustration was the year I spent as graduate dean of the two campuses. That was the time when the power structure of the university began to fall apart. I was acting dean; there were two chancellors who were anxious to have separate graduate schools. One was Robert MacVicar and the other was John Rendelman. I had chaired the committee that recommended the separation of the graduate schools, but I was in the position of graduate dean and here I had both of them pressing me. That was a year in which the Edwardsville campus made a major push for the establishment of Ph.D. programs and I was in the position of having to block it, to resist the pressure because 1970 was the year in which a national crisis in the Ph.D. programs developed throughout the country. Universities had over produced and were forced to begin reducing the number of Ph.D. programs. There are a lot faculty who felt that they should have Ph.D. programs. Mathematics presented a proposal for a Ph.D. program and I dragged my feet on it. They did get it approved by the Graduate Council, but I didn't particularly push it. So I had that as a problem.

Q: Excuse me. Before you go on please clarify the statement the power structure began to fall apart. To what are you referring?

At The 1969-1970 academic was year in which a great scandal developed about Morris' building a million dollar house to live in and there were state investigations of the university. There were questions about Rendelmen's involvement and he was made a target. There were particularly questions about Morris' handling in the university. At that time Morris was very vulnerable and these two very aggressive chancellors just began going their own ways. That was also the year that MacVickar decided to leave and go to Oregon. So the graduate deanship was sort of left in a very vulnerable position.

There was a feeling on the Carbondale campus that SIUE was trying to move too quickly towards Ph.D.'s and I did not want to stifle that aspiration completely. As graduate dean I was presiding over the combined graduate programs. I think in that year there was also difficulty in education. Education wanted a Ph.D. program and we didn't move fast enough for them. They felt I was an obstruction. I also became involved in a struggle with Rendleman over off campus programs. This was an effort to establish masters programs off campus where a faculty member would go to an army post and offer courses on maybe a weekend basis and that would become the basis for a degree program in business.

There was a feeling, a strong feeling among many faculty that this was really not a proper graduate program with adequate standards. I don't know whether they still go on or not, but they eventually were established after I left the deanship and the university did offer off campus degree programs.

meeting to be held on Bluff Road and Simon came and explained his people of Illinois. Simon came from this district. So I arranged a issue. He felt that it would be imposing too many taxes on the reference to the bond issue. Paul Simon was opposed to the bond Another amusing or interesting thing that happened was in as I remember. So that was an interesting evening.

white and I think it was interesting. One of them was carrying a gun invite local politicians and they came. We drank with them for a faculty in East St. Louis arranged to hire a room in a hotel and to of local politicians after the two centers were united. A number of to the general populace for referendum. SIU tried to get the support in order to get the bond issue passed the state decided to refer it the early years, there was an effort to get a bond issue passed and A: There are a number that involved SIU and politicians. During

that happened during your career around here? Another question that is kind of fun is what are some humorous things Now lets lighten things up a bit. We have been quite serious.

us this side of the story of SIUE. that I got off onto that. I don't know anybody else who could give Q: What you have shared only you could share and I am very glad

I suppose that in due time I would think of others. A: There are always frustrations. None major that I can think of.

any other frustrations in other positions? Graduate dean. Were there any other in your long and varied career? Q: These frustrations you have addressed were largely relative to

views at that meeting about his opposition to the bond issue. It was an interesting meeting. He held his ground. I respected him for this because he was very popular with the people of this area. I think some of my best memories that are about the time that I lived on campus. I was the only faculty member who lived campus. I had a house on Bluff Road.

Q: I remember it.

A: I got it when I became division head so I could be centered between East St. Louis and Alton and it was a pleasant place to live. When I became acting dean I used to walk to work through the construction. It was good exercise.

Q: All right if something comes to mind we will grab it. Whatever it is. We have spoken of your frustrations. A somewhat related question, some of your worst memories?

A: One of my worst memories was the formal opening of this university.

Q: That was September 65?

A: We were assembled in the library for this opening. Somewhat before that they had these mobile x-ray units that came around and I took an x-ray and at that time I didn't have any doctors so I didn't put any doctors name down, but they took this x-ray and they didn't

know who to send the results to. They finally decided to send them to me--the letter that ordinarily went to the patient and also the letter that ordinarily went to the doctor.

The letter that went to the doctor said in fact that this man is in bad shape. He has indications that he has a tumor and there should be some action taken. I got that just before the formal assembly for the opening and I sat through it listening to very dull speeches and the usual kind of speeches and all the time I was wondering what should I do. I called a friend in St. Louis who was a doctor and he said come on over. So I went over. They had a regular x-ray taken. These mobile units just have a small one and he said there was nothing, so not to worry.

Q: Well that would be a scary one. Any other unpleasant experiences around here.

A: I can remember being very angry and screaming at Rendleman over what I thought was an interference in the operation of the Promotion, Tenure and Appeals Committee. But he didn't interfere. I was angry at the action of the chairman.

Q: Now what would you... this is an open ended question. As you know we had a formal history of SIU published some years ago and there may be future official history's of this university. What might you want to record that would never end up in an official history? Not exactly off the record but some unusual or strange or ...

hope all over again?

Q: Would you do it all over again? Would you come here and stay

END OF SIDE 1

want to stop working at SIM.

people I retired not because I want to stop working but because I

A: No. I have had a very good exciting retirement. As I tell

Q: Do you ever wish you hadn't retired?

A: Yes.

you enjoy keeping your relations with the university to that extent?

Q: You come back occasionally and teach as call staff. I presume

involved in selection of vice-presidents.

, 76. I was interested in serving on a number of committees that were

the university on the State Advisory Committee and that was '72 to

one of the things that I did enjoy very much was representing

and I just there is too much so I can't remember it.

struggles and not much of that appears in the official university.

A: A large part of university operations is campus politics and

Q: Not in detail, spelled out anyway.

thing Harold see is in the official history not is campus politics.

A: I think I have said most of it. I don't think the politics of

Q: Well what's three good ones. Going, Richardson, and Sturley.

A: And Bill Sturley.

Q: He came when I did.

was here from the beginning.

were involved in campus activities who have been John Richardson. He

A: I think he would be the most important. Some of the others who

Q: All right. Dean Going. I have written him a letter.

A: Well above all I would recommend Bill Going.

only two other people who would you recommend.

Q: One final question Professor Rosenthal, if I could interview

A: No.

you have thought of that you would care to share with us right now?

Let me ask two more questions. One is there anything else that

or two.

historian. I remember that very clearly. That was a memorable day

the library one of the volumes you had contributed to as an army

Q: I remember when you brought me here in 1959 and you showed me in

in the long run that deserves more attention than I gave to it.

A: Yes. But I think I would spend more time in publishing because

A: Maybe Bunkle has some memories.

Q: Yes. Jerry Bunkel.

A: Of course Bob Erickson.

Q: Bob came the year I did. Well thanks Herb for coming out and sharing all this with us.

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