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ORAL HISTORY

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7-19-92

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SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summer 1990-91

Dorris Wilton, April 29, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: WILTON.429

Q: Dorrie thanks for coming by. Dorris Wilton director of Admissions and Records. Why did you come to SIUE in the first place ?

A: I thought it would be a wonderful place to start out on the ground floor--someplace to work and it was. Also I thought that it would be a great challenge and an exciting one, to help build a new university.

Q: Where were you at the time?

A: I was at the Olin Corporation.

Q: What were you doing there?

A: I was the Assistant Purchasing Agent in the Purchasing Department.

Q: This is 1958.

A: 1958. Yes sir.

Q: It's a pleasure to be able to talk to somebody that's been here longer than I have.

A: I came November the 17th, 1958, somehow I was not put on the payroll until December the 1st, 1958. So I worked for two weeks without any pay.

Q: Did they ever rectify that?

A: No. No, they didn't.

Q: Not even when you retired?

A: No they didn't.

Q: You should have gotten it all with interest. It might have amounted to something.

A: My first official day was December the 1st, 1958.

Q: I came in August of '59. How did you find out about the position?

A: I'd heard about it. The *Alton Telegraph* had carried articles stating that a new university was going to be developed near Edwardsville. I applied, but nothing happened for quite a long while until one day I got a phone call from the Personnel Office asking me to come in for an interview. I did and filed out an application.

I was sent me to East St. Louis to talk to a man named Mr. Sheer. Mr. Sheer asked me what kind of cleaning utensils I would use to clean wash rooms and floors and I said well probably Bon Ami, water, and elbow power and we finally found that I had been sent to the wrong place. He had sent me to the janitorial staff at East St. Louis to apply for a job as janitor and when they found out that was the wrong office they sent me back to Morris Carr who then in turn sent me to the chair who was Dee Lovell of the Political Science-Social Science School.

Then I talked to him and then I talked to John Schnabel who offered me a job few days later, which I accepted.

Q: Well I suppose that's a first, kind of humorous.... You applied you got the job and you were here until 1990 that's 32 years.

A: I started working in the Registrar's Office in December of 1958. Later in 1962 I also became a member of the History Department in the field of Colonial and Civil War history.

And then I retired from the university and the Office of Admissions and Records in August of 1987 and worked for 2 and a half more years with the History Department as a professor. My last teaching assignment was in June, 1990. That's 32 years total I was on the payroll.

Q: Les Farrar also did some teaching I know.

A: Les Farrar worked in the evening college of SIUE in East St. Louis and about 1966 he quit for two years. He went up to the University of Illinois to get more schooling then he came back and started here in '69 in the Office of Admissions and Records (formerly the Registrar's Office). I got him the job and he is still there now. He did teach for several years one class per quarter, generally Latin American courses.

Q: I interviewed Les last week and we talked about this but, I don't think that anyone has gone back and forth between administration and teaching as much as you have.

A: In 1962, Bob Erickson, then chair of the History Department asked me if I'd like to teach. I said yes. I started teaching one class, two or three classes a year maybe. Did that off and on until about 1980. From 1982 to '87 I didn't teach at all due to a new rule that you could not teach and be an administrator at the same time. After I retired Dean Pearson asked me if I would like to have a two year contract and I said sure. So after that I taught one class every quarter for two years which was up until June of 1990.

Q: Well you successfully lived in both worlds.

A: Yes, sir. And I enjoyed it greatly. To this date I think it was wonderful.

Q: I have never gone into any administration. How come you spent 32 years here? Why did you stay?

A: I loved it. I loved it. This was not just a job. I got up every morning eager and ready to go and I guess the first nine, ten years here we worked sixty, seventy hours a week and we didn't feel bad about it at all. It was simply fun. Everybody who worked at East St. Louis like Alan McCurry, David Rands, and Dee Lovell, Bob Erickson, and myself always say that was the best "fun working" days of our lives down there and it has continued up here. Although not really as much fun down there but it was still fun.

{There was a great spirit of comaraderie there and every one felt close to other people. We felt that we were starting a new and fine university and almost every one was eager to do a good job. So, despite the poor environment--over crowded classrooms, noise from the traffic, dirty buidings, no air conditioning, and little equipment, the Pioneer spirit of the faculty and staff at the old East St. Louis High School resulted in a fantastic job of giving many students a great chance for an education., Those years, 1958-65, were truly wonderful days--the kick off for the Edwardsville campus of today.}

It was not as much fun on the Edwardsville campus as East St. Louis in the olden days. We didn't worry about our paycheck we didn't worry about the problems. We simply faced and solved them.

Q: Your right it was a lot of fun. We were a much closer group, more cohesive.

A: Right. {Those early days proved that a good teacher can teach in a cow shed.}

Q: And kind of one big happy family.

A: Part of that time I was in East St. Louis one day and Alton the next day for about three years. One day I would go to East St. Louis and the next day I would go to Alton. Back and forth. That got hairy some days. Frequently I was in the wrong place at the wrong time.

Q: And you were living in Edwardsville?

A: I was living in Edwardsville. Yea.

I taught in those early '60's both on East St. Louis campus and Alton campus as well as worked at both the Admissions and Records Office at both places too.

Q: Would you say that you were always in one part of the Admissions and Records?

A: There was admissions, registration, and records. I was always in one of those three places. So I did about every job possible in that entire office. It's a big office. I worked in records, I worked in admissions, I worked in registration. There were some fine people in those areas down through the years.

Q: I know that you were only a phone call away when I came up with all kinds of strange problems that I didn't know how to handle. I would just call Dorrie Wilton, get the answer and get on my way. You say it was fun and we did mention some of the reasons, closeness.

A: There was a challenge we had never heard of before. It was a new campus. Very few of us knew all the answer or any answers, so if you got a problem you had to solve it yourself. You couldn't contact anybody.

Today if you have a problem you call somebody on this big campus who is an expert in the particular field. Then we solved our own problems and of course the only place who could really help us was Carbondale so we called or went down to see them. We probably went to Carbondale two or three times a week. In fact one time they sent me to Carbondale twice in one day.

Q: How could you even get to Carbondale twice in one day?

A: I got up at five in the morning. Took a lot of registration packets and papers down to Carbondale to be processed. I left there at eleven, got back here at about two o'clock and someone said this matgerial had to go back down there again so we got in the car about two o'clock so we got back around ten that night.

Q: That's a unique story.

A: That was a unique story. And I tell you I was tired that night, but that was part of the ball game in those Pioneer days.

Q: I would go down perhaps once a quarter and I hated that.

A: We had to take all our registration papers down there to be processed through their IBM machine is one of the main reasons we went down there. People registered for class and all those cards we had by the thousands had to be taken down there to be processed.

Q: Did you ever fly in the Delyte Morris Air Force?

A: No. I never did. From the stories I have heard, I am glad I did not.

Q: I flew a few times. Did you ever, speaking of Carbondale and the interrelation of these two campus which is very important and it's only old timers like us that even know about it, participate in some of the meetings when we would meet in Marissa?

A: Yes, sir. I did.

Q: Do you remember the restaurant we usually met at...

A: I remember it quite well. I can't think of the name.

Q: Orrs.

A: The Orr House I loved that name.

Q: And of course we made all kinds of stupid jokes about going to the Orr House.

A: I remember telling my wife about that Orr House, she laughed and laughed.

Q: When we would go down to meet with Morris it was like having an audience.

A: That's right. He did all the talking.

Q: And we just sat there.

A: He talked, talked, talked.

Q: He was quite an aristocrat and a dictator but we wouldn't be here today

A: If it weren't for him. He truly made the university.

Q: Share some more reflections and some memories of the inter-campus relations and also the inter-center relations.

A: Most of our dealings dealt with the Office of Admissions and Records at Carbondale. Most of the time those people were very cooperative, although, I felt they were a little bit jealous of us. Why, I don't know.

Probably the funniest thing ever to happen to me was when I came back one night about Carbondale, got back about eleven o'clock. Came into the East St. Louis campus where no lights were on, nothing burning. I parked the university car next to my car. As I got out

of the university car a great big figure came across that dark parking lot and I thought, oh man I am going to be held me up. Then the fellow said, I am looking for the Office of the Registrar. I want to go to school here next fall.

Midnight in East St. Louis in a dark parking lot and this great big stranger says can you tell me where the registrars office. I said well it's closed right now but if you will come back tomorrow morning I'll make an appointment I'll make sure you get into school and so we made an appointment with this big fellow and he walked down the street and I got my car and drove home to Alton.

Next morning about eight o'clock and the guy came in. I got him admitted and resitered. He became a good student.

Q: Maybe he saw you go in and decided he would ask. Maybe he thought you were the night shift.

A: I thought I was going to be held up.

Q: I'm sure you did. That would be anybody's first reaction.

You mention cooperation, that generally speaking in your experience in your end of the university you had cordial relations with Carbondale.

A: Yes, sir.

Q: You however made reference to the fact that you thought they were ...

A: A little jealous.

Q: Jealous of us. And you say you weren't quite sure why.

A: I don't know why. I never understood why. There was never anything said outwardly. Just little comments here and there. I heard other people say they had the same feeling.

Q: Did you ever work with Herold See?

A: Yes, oh yes.

Q: I would like you to comment on that and his enthusiasm and his dreams.

A: I liked him. He was quite cooperative and very easy going. He often came by my office and would sit down and talk to me about this and that, the little problems he was having. He loaned me his car one time to go to Carbondale when I didn't have a car to go down there in. He had little parties at his house every now and then for groups of faculty, groups of staff twice a year and have a picnic or outdoors event. I was I enjoyed working with him. I liked him. {Also I always felt he was a very able administrator. He worked hard and was well liked,. He did a tremendous job in getting this university started. His dreams came true.}

Q: When I was interviewed by him I really caught his spirit. He wanted to really do something.

A: Yes he did. {He was enthusiastic about it. And everyone became filled with his spirit of a univeristy for Southewestern Illinois on the banks of the Father of Waters...to quote him.}

Q: I think Morris got rid of him as a potential competition. Would you agree with that?

A: Yes, yes, yes. I think See got too popular for Morris' liking. {I will never forget the day the students on the East St. Louis campus went on strike because Dr. See had been fired by Dr. Morris. Also, most of the faculty was up in arms about this.}

Q: And then he was simply as we say kicked upstairs.

A: That's right and gone.

A: Before that he came by my office once a week or so, sat down talked. He'd ask what problems I was having and so on like that. And we discussed it which is unusual for a busy, busy vice-president trying to start a new university.

{Also he was unusual in that you could talk to him very easily, as one man said, he might be a vice-president, but he was comfortable to talk to as an old shoe.) A lot like a later SIUE president, Rendleman.}}

Q: Yes.

A: It was appreciated; it created loyalty to him.

Q: In your various capacities, in teaching, in administering, what would you consider your most significant contributions to the university and to the area?

A: I would say I had the ability to cut red tape for students who had a major problem and send them on their way happy. I had the ability on the spot where I could cut red tape right to the bone and get them on their way so they wouldn't be so upset by whatever they were facing.

{Also, I tried my best to be a helping hand to the faculty who had problems in reference to grades, rules, and anything they needed assistance in.}

Q: You must have dealt with how many thousand students over the years?

A: I am sure I dealt with thousands. Also I've hired at least twelve hundred to fifteen hundred students myself to work in my office in thirty-two years.

Q: That's got to be another record.

A: And probably I'd talk to from oh maybe one or two to maybe hundred, hundred and fifty students a day, depending on the time of the year and whether registration was going on or not. I've seen times in East St. Louis when I've probably talked to maybe two hundred a day at registration. We had ten days of registration.

They'd come in by the hundreds and I'd talk to them about this and that from eight o'clock in the morning until eight o'clock at night or maybe a little bit longer.

Q: Generally solving problems.

A: Solving problems.

Q: That was your job in registration?.

A: Yes.

Q: A trouble shooter.

A: And you know after twenty, twenty-five years of it I got so I knew nearly all the answers. If I didn't know the answer I knew how to get that problem solved because I knew the people. I knew the way to go. Plus I knew which rules I could break and which rules I couldn't break.

Q: Now is as good a time as any for me to say that over these many years as I mentioned previously I always considered you only a four digit phone call from a answer real quick to the odd - or at least to me very odd ball, strange things....

A: I still receive Christmas cards from kids I did favors for back in 1961 or '62, Christmas cards from students who I don't even remember what I did for. Well of course that's a two way street. A

lot of times I have to say no. So quite often I've found my position as being either loved or hated by students depending on what answer I gave them. Sometimes they wanted to register for classes at the end of the quarter or they wanted to have their negative grades changed or dropped. Imagine that!

Q: What courses did you teach?

A: Colonial history and the Civil War period, early days to 1815 and from 1815 to 1900 - those two periods.

Q: Coming into the classroom from administration and your relationship to the department, was there anything unusual about it, pleasant, unpleasant?

A: No. It was very pleasant. I had nothing but respect, affection from members of the History Department at all times. In fact I'll tell you a little secret. From 1962 until 1980 when I taught two or three times a year. I never was paid a cent for all that. It was gratis on my part, but I had a great time doing it.

Q: What?

A: Except for about two years, and this was funny. Bob Erickson didn't have any money to pay me in 1962 or '63 so he said that since it was an evening class, I should bring my lunch and dinner with me,

then bill the universtiy \$5 for dinner each night of class. And that's the only pay I got for teaching until I started teaching full time in 1988. Then I got paid a salary.

Q: You were working for a minimum, perhaps not even minimum wage.

A: I did it on my own free will because I liked it and I enjoyed it. It was a change of pace. I saw the university in a different light. I saw the students in a different light than I did in the Office of Admissions and Records.

Q: I would think that that different light or the two perspectives would have one helped you as a teacher and two also as an administrator.

A: Yes. It was great for both jobs. I could see much more than I could as a straight administrator or a straight teacher.

Q: What gave you your greatest satisfactions here at SIUE?

A: You mean of those two areas in which I worked?

Q: Yes.

A: I had great satisfaction from each job as I indicated a while ago. The fact that I could solve a problem and cut to the heart of a problem and help somebody made me feel good.

{It was very stimulating, and challengeing working two job of this nature. I was very satisfied. I felt I was doing something worthwhile.}

Q: Give us an example of these problems that you had to solve.

A: Say a student came in and he's been signed up for too many classes, like 24 hrs. He's sure to flunk two or three classes. I'd get him out of those classes and get him down to eighteen hours without any penalty on him.

People who come in to register late and everyone told them no, no, no, no including the faculty. I'd get them registered for classes in my office.

I'd go talk to the professor and say hey here's a student who just came home from Germany can you let him in your class? He had already been told no by the same instructor, but after the facts were known he would accept the student. I'd get him in the class like that. A student who wanted to register after the cut off date when no one could register. I could register him if I felt he had a reason to do so. Things like that.

For another example. A student is kicked out of school for academic reasons. I know the reasons. Nobody else knows them but me, such as he had to put his mother into a mental institution and, of course, he wouldd be reluctant to tell many people about this. I would let him back in school even though he was not eligible to get back in school on the condition that you make a 'C' average or better. And I kept track of those poor souls for about three years. Seven out of ten made it when I let them back in.

Q: So you were kind of a Dutch Uncle at times.

A: Yes, something like that.

Q: That is satisfying to give somebody a chance and have them take it.

A: Extremely. Now I had one boy who was turned down, was not in school because he had bad grades at another school. He came to me and he talked to me about it. I let him in after I lectured him a bit. That was about 1975. About 1984 or '85 I got a nice letter from him out of the clear blue sky. He's a lawyer up in Chicago. And he happened to think about his days when he was not allowed to come to SIU and I let him in.

He wrote me a very nice letter. It brought tears to my eyes. About how I let him in school and he graduated from SIU with better than a 4.0. He went to law school and now he has a fine job in Chicago that was a very nice letter out of the clear blue sky ten years after the last time I saw him.

Q: Very satisfying I'm sure. What were some of your frustrations around here?

A: The frustrations I had were in the early years when there was a problem to be solved and I didn't have any answers. For example I didn't have enough furniture. I didn't have enough hands. I didn't have enough background to do my job so I had to make do with what I had. It wasn't always what I liked to do, but I had to do it. I

didn't have enough chairs for my office. I had maybe two kids or three kids sitting at each desk. And sometimes the supervisors we had were not cooperative with us. They were not on the East St. Louis campus or Alton campus. They didn't know the problems I had down there in Alton or East St. Louis.

So you either had to do things, not do it, or else go behind their back and do something which we did if I thought I wanted it. It was very frustrating, plus the fact that we put in seventy-five, eighty hours a week sometimes at the start of each quarter registering people and you got very tired after about ten days of registration. Eight in the morning 'til eight at night, ten days, Monday through Friday and Saturday mornings and that was awful hard we could have used more help, but we didn't have it.

Q: We really were pioneering.

A: That's right. That was the thing that kept us going. Hey I'm doing something. We are pioneering a new university. We didn't worry about salary or things like that. We were working under bad conditions. In East St. Louis we worked down there for about four years without any air conditioning. Faculty members had to teach in classrooms adjacent to heavy trucks going down the streets and every time a heavy truck came by they'd have to stop lecturing 'til it would pass by.

In the summer, with no air conditioning except open windows, hundreds of June bugs would create havoc as they'd hit a professors face or go in some girls hair or come into the office and your so sweaty your hands are sticking to the desk and bugs are on there. In

East St. Louis there was one only restroom that really worked down there. I took a walk up to Sears and Roebuck a block away or to a tavern up there a block away to go to the restroom. I always wore a white shirt and tie and coat, but by 9:00 down there on a hot summer day I looked like I had been shoveling coal for a week.

Q: This is priceless, Dorrie.

A: I remember one time down there a kid said, my wife's gonna have a baby, come and get me out of class when the time comes. I said sure. I knew his name. I knew where his class was. One day the woman calls and said I'm having a baby can you get a hold of my husband? Yes, I told her, I'll get hold of him. I went up to his classroom and I couldn't find him. He was not in class that day so I came back and I said maam he's not there what should I do? She said don't worry about it I'll take a cab to the hospital. That was about 1962.

In 1982 a young man walked into my office and I said, hey I recognize your name. I asked him who his dad was. He told me. I said well when were you born. He said 1962. I said your the boy whose daddy wasn't there when you were to be born and then your mother had to take a cab to the hospital. Hed nodded, yes. I said well I'm the guy that tried to find your daddy that day.

I said do you know where your daddy was? He said no. He was up in the tavern playing cards that afternoon and now that father is now tax assessor of a large county. I think that's a god story.

Q: It is. See if there's some other things you can add of a highly unusual nature.

A: There were a lot of them.

Q: Well we've got time.

A: I remember one time I got criticized by the administration. One day I made a big sign "If your now standing in line it's because you did not advance register". The vice-president did not like that very much and told me to take it down.

Q: Did you ever work at the Alton campus?

A: Yes I did. My office was in that little brick building on the corner across from the college. I was there on Monday, Wednesday and Fridays and in East St. Louis on Tuesdays and Thursdays from 1962 to 64. I had ten students in each office. So when I was in East St. Louis they'd call me on the phone from Alton and vice-versa. So I was running to two offices at the same time, thirty miles apart.

Q: Was there any significant differences in your work at both campuses?

A: No, the procedure was the same because I set the same procedure up at both places. The Alton campus was a little bit neater. More like a campus rather than a dirty old building in East St. Louis.

Q: In E. St. Louis it was the Rock Junior High.

A: Rock Junior High School. I think there was a closer knit feeling in ESL. The students were closer to each other and the faculty was closer to each other. In Alton they were scattered. It was much more fun in East St. Louis than it was in Alton because in Alton you never saw each other. At East St. Louis all the faculty ate together every noon. I did more business with the faculty in the lunch room than I did in my office. In Alton I never had that close contact with faculty members or knew them as well.

Q: Did you come to Edwardsville in August of '65.

A: Yes, when we opened here your office would have been over here in Peck.

A: Right.

Q: Would you care to add any other in the general category of best memories around here?

A: {There were many hard working, dedicated people at Southern in the Pioneer days-1957-65. All of them can not be mentioned, but in my memory, five of them stand out. They were honest, exceptional men, who believed in the university. Their efforts went unsung, but their jobs were important. They did them well. The real work on a project is usually done by many unknown people. In this case the five men who impressed me so and who I knew so well, were Bill Probst and David

Rands of the Chemistry Dept., Allan McCurry of the History Dept., Eugene Magac of the Registrar's Office, and Les Farrar, Room Scheduling Officer

These men with their earnest efforts did much to make SIUE what it is today. They are only a few, but typical of the Pioneer staff of SIUE.

Also I must mention Dr. John Schnabel, the Registrar, probably the earliest of the Pioneers who, in my opinion, carried a very large administrative load for this university in the days of infancy. He was a big factor in the development of the school.

There is one other thing I would like to mention in this interview, Stanley. In 1959, an excellent Accounting professor by the name of Joe Small stopped by my office, and said he was considering starting a Credit Union for the employees of SIUE. We talked it over and when Joe had convinced ten other people of its worth the SWICSIU Credit Union was officially formed and registered with the state. Today that Credit Union has over 2,600 members and about \$5 million in assets.}

Q: And I am a member myself.

A: And that was quite a start from nothing. We built something pretty big there. I have been a member of the board of directors off and on for the last 30 years. I have two or three different times been a member of the board of directors.

Q: Joe Small was in the School of Business?

A: Accounting.

Q: He is no longer with us.

A: He passed away in 1967 and that's when Maxine Pakovich became the general manager.

I remember one time in East ST. Louis, Joe wrote back and forth to each other from East St. Louis. Joe went off and forgot me one evening and I was there from about five o'clock to eight o'clock trying to find somebody to bring me back up to Edwardsville. I was planning on sleeping on my desk that night.

Finally I found another fellow who was going to Edwardsville. I went around to all of the classrooms to talk to every professor where do you live. And they all said St. Louis or Alton or someplace foreign like that. Finally I found a guy who lives in Edwardsville. I said I'm going home with you. I'm going to sit in the back row of your class where you teach your last hour so you don't go home without me. That was a strange experience. I was a little shook that night.

Q: Your worst memories around here?

A: You mean in regard to work?

Q: Yes, your work, your teaching, your students.

A: I have few bad memories. One was when I was teaching history. We study history, I said, to instill patriotism in people and and somebody in the back row hollered out bullshit. That bothered me so I dismissed the class and give them a ten minute break. And went back to the room and face to face with these three young men who had disrupted the class. {I told them in no uncertain terms that I would not tolerate such language in my class roomn. My old First Sergeant would have been proud of me. After that it was a good class. Those young men acted like gentlemen thereafter.

Other bad memories were when students thretened to sue me and the university when they thought they had been treated wrongly.}

Q: Any other pleasant or unpleasant memories?

A: I guess one of the funniest, and yet saddest things I ever had was that one day an elderly gentleman came in my office about twelve or thirteen years ago. He said he was here to see about his grandson. He paid his grandson's way through college because the boy's parents has been divorced. But he couldn't find his grandson anywhere. He said he lived at Tower Lake but he doesn't live there anymore. I said, what do you mean he doesn't? He said they told me he moved out.

To make a long story short I found out that the grandson was living with his English teacher and she was teaching him more than English. The grandfather didn't like that set up because he didn't send his boy to school to live with a girl without the benefit of marriage. The kid was about 18 and this English teacher was at least

35. That was a tough one to handle because due to the federal privacy act I couldn't do too much to help him except pat him on the back.

Q: Anything else on this particular subject on student-faculty relationships that you might want to record.

A: One time I had a young lady in my history class who was flunking it. She came up to my classroom to ask if there was anything she could do physically to pass my class. I said yes there is, you can study, study, study and then I showed her the door.

Then I had another one-- a girl and her mother came to see me. She had just been kicked out of school for academic reasons. The mother said my daughter has to get to college. She reached in her purse and handed me a roll of bills that would have choked a cow. All I could see were twenties on the outside. I put both of my hands in my pockets and I said lady don't even talk about this. I urge you to leave. We do not operate that way here.

She put that money back in her purse and wanted to know what to do with her daughter. I said I suggest your daughter go to a junior college and prove to us that she can do academic work. She had been flunked out of here two or three times. They left unhappy. That attempted bribe bothered me.

Q: Yes, if you were making those miserable wages you mentioned a little while back.

A: I started out at \$250 a month as a civil service worker. Six months later I switched over to professional staff and they doubled my wages then. But that first year was rough here, but I have never regretted it.

Q: I came here a nine month contract at \$700 a month, August of '59. That was pretty good money in August of '59.

A: I was making about \$550 a month in June 1959.

Q: You have mentioned a time or two your work with Olin Matthieson.

A: Yes, sir. At the same time I was teaching night school at Shurtleff College. I was at Shurtleff College from '51 to '58 teaching two nights a week. One night economics one night purchasing.

Q: You are the first person I have interviewed who taught at Shurtleff. I did not know that and you may be one of the very few that I will be able to interview. s. Tell us about your Shurtleff days.

A: I was a freshman at Shurtleff from September of '40 to '41 and then I dropped out for a year to go to another school.

Q: To go to which school?

A: University of Toledo in 1941. The war started in December of '41. That following summer I came back to Alton, went to Shurtleff for about two months and then I enlisted in the army. I was gone for 3 1/2 years and came back in 1946 and attended the University of Illinois to 1951. Shurtleff college for a student was a very small place--only about 400 students and if you had a date on Friday night, by Monday morning at 8:00 everyone knew who you went out with and what time you got in that night.

I did not like it because I didn't think the teaching was too good in many areas. I had an excellent history teacher, Frank Friedel at Shurtleff college who had just started his teaching career in 1940. Later he became one of the outstanding historians of America. He has taught at Harvard, Stanford, University of Illinois and in several other schools.

Shurtleff dissolved in 1957 due to poor management, low enrollement, and a loss of its mission in education. Yet when SIU took over that next year in June of 1957 they had more students than they could handle there for registration. The demand for education was there but they weren't putting out what the students wanted under Shurtleff college. It was a sad thing working at a dying place. I could see it dying. Often they wouldn't have teachers for class until the classes started. I got my job teaching there in 1951. They called me up one night about 6:30 wanted to know if I could come in and start teaching class that night at 7:00. I huseled. I lived in Godfrey at that time. I had to get dressed and get some notes together and rush off to campus to be there by 7:00 to teach. That's

the way it was every quarter. You never knew you were going to teach or what you were going to teach even until almost the same night the classes started. That's poor management.

Q: When did you leave Shurtleff and go to Olin Matthieson?

A: I was working at Olin in the day time and teaching at night.

Q: Were you there then during the transition from Shurtleff to...

A: Yes, sir.

Q: Tell us about that.

A: Well Shurtleff was greatly in debt. They even allowed hundreds of students to graduate owing the school large sums of money. They couldn't pay anymore teachers. So Shurtleff dissolved and turned it over to SIU. I helped the president get rid of his books and pack things up like that and hide some things and take some of the better stuff to the Shurtleff Foundation. That was all I had to do with it and SIU took over and I didn't have anything to do with it again until I started working in December '58.

Q: I was told that formally somebody actually turned a lock presumably on the administration building and that was the formal dissolution of Shurtleff.

A: I have not heard that.

Q: And then a few minutes later someone opened that door and that was the formal beginning

A: Could have been, could have been.

Q: Mildred Arnold told me this story. Mildred has been here even longer than you Dorrie.

A: I know that.

Q: I think she said she was either the first, or among the first, that went through those sacred portholes.

A: There were several other people who came from Shurtleff to SIU. One was a lady by the name of Clair Blackard [Girard] who was a history teacher. Another was Robert Murdock, and excellent English professor. I think another staff member, Pinkstaff, came here for a few years.

Q: Eric Sturley, did he come?

A: No I don't think he did. To my knowledge he was not at Shurtleff college.

Q: Who else ever came aboard from Shurtleff?

A: Margaret Brady, a Business Ed. Instructor. another fine teacher.

Q: Ed Warren.

A: Ed Warren, that's right. Music. They did not bring many of them to SIU. Some of them were let go.

Q: You have mentioned at least once, perhaps twice, your work for Olin Matthieson in the personnel department.

A: Purchasing.

Q: Purchasing. Yes you mentioned that. You had to learn an awful lot about your new job that that work had not prepared you for.

A: That's right. That's right. When I came into the Registrars Office I was as green as any freshman who ever walked on any college campus. I had to learn from scratch. I was interviewed by Morris Carr who in turn sent me to John Schnabel who hired me.

Q: Were you involved in relating the university to the community? If so please comment on this.

A: In 1960 you will recall there was a big push on to get a bond issue passed here.

Q: Very well.

A: And I guess I gave at least two or three speeches a week at various places from Milstadt to Jerseyville as far as north Litchfield while that big push was going on. I guess I made 15 to 20 speeches to various groups--Rotary clubs, women's clubs, church groups, high schools, PTAs for I guess, how long did that last? Six months a year. Bruce Brubaker was the chair of the Bond Issue speakers unit.

Q: Bruce Brubaker gave me Green County. My job was to make sure that the good people of Green County voted for what we called our War Chest. The bond issue to build this university.BBthing. So I never did anything like 30 or more

How do you feel Southwestern Illinois received the university?

A: You mean after it was formed here?

Q: Yes.

A: I think on the whole very well. (mixed voices)

Q: Afterwards?

A: There are still groups today that are against the university. I hear that, but as a whole it is very well received. I do a lot of visiting and socializing with people in small communities. I hunt and fish lot and that's how I know a lot of farmers and they all think SIUE is wonderful. Though I have heard some merchants in town

don't like it because they claim they got ripped off by faculty members and students who didn't pay their bills, but the vast majority of people like it very much.

Q: You know the top story of the University Center was suppose to have been an overnight conference center and the local hotel/motel association killed that. Unfair competition they said. Once again patently ridiculous, but that's why it is an awkward situation to invite a guest to this campus.

A: Yes, you have to bring them into the Holiday Inn way down on the Collinsville strip.

Q: When I first came here I invited guests and I quickly found out I had to pick them up at the airport and furnish all transportation.

A: It's a real hassle even today. You still have to pick them up.

END OF SIDE 1

Q: Were you involved in any special way, programs, teaching, administration directed to the educationally deprived or the handicapped.

A: No I have not been.

Q: For the record. I suspect you would agree that this university has a good track record however in those areas

A: There is one thing which I would like to mention.

Q: Good.

A: In the '70's there was no provision for people who were over say 24 years old and wanted an education. No helping hand to guide these people. {So I started making an extra effort to help and counsel those mature students. It woekd out very well. Thjese odler stgudetns neede and apprediated a guiding touch. That worked out very well for a couple years but it got to more than I could handle and somebody started forming an organization for people who were over 24 and wanted an education.

Q: I think we call that today the Office of Continuing Ed.

A: Yes, that's right. But before they were doing that I was doing it all by myself. For example we had a guy by the name of George Gregory who was 72 when he came to us. His wife had died, he had worked 50 years at the railroad and he wanted to get a degree in geology or in geography. I had him in a class and he was a delightful man. He got his degree when he was 76. One time in my class one Monday morning he raised his hand and said, Mr. Wilton before you start lecturing may I say something? I said yes. He stood up and he said well I want everyone in the class to know that I got married Saturday night. Delightful.

And another time he said Mr. Wilton may I make one more statement before I leave today. I said yes, what is it George? He said I would like everybody to know that I got a new base ball hat

this year. He showed me his bright red ball hat with the St. Louis logo on the top and the kids just clapped and the last day of that class they took up a collection and got him a present. A book I believe it was on geography and gave it to him.

My class did this on their own without anybody mentioning it. I did not know they were going to do it. He was a delightful man and that's what an elderly person can do in a class. He was not afraid to speak up. He did a wonderful job and the students loved him.

Q: From those primitive beginnings that you mentioned we have stepped out. We have not only the Office of Continuing Education, but alsoe Tony Traxler's Gerontology program, and Reba Klenke's Elderhostel. I think this university is making a great contribution to the senior citizens.

A: I think it's wonderful.

Q: Since you and I are both now senior citizens.

A: You bet we are.

Q: I suspect both of us are a little more sensitive to this than we might be otherwise. Based on your experience at SIUE what contributions do you believe the university has made to the area?

A: It has given thousands of boys and girls a chance at an education which they would not have gotten otherwise. If my memory serves me right, we probably have awarded 35 maybe 37,000 degrees

since 1957. And I would guess that the vast majority of those would not have a college degree if it were'nt for SIUE. (mixed voices) But to me the education to the students was the biggest contribution.

Q: And then all sorts of enrichment programs.

A: Sports events, dance, plays all those things add up.

Q: Conferences, plus all of this expertise on tap.

A: That's right.

Q: I would like to think that our graduates have upgraded public education.

A: Quite frequently I read in the paper where someone who's a graduate of SIU has received a teacher's award. For example last week I read that somebody over in Belleville West received a teacher's award for being an excellent history teacher. Graduate of SIUE. Which I thought was super.

Q: What would you like to record which probably would never appear in an official history?

A: Being of a humorous nature? Oh I remember something that was kind of funny. One time there was an administrator on campus who was not very well liked so one day one of his employees went rabbit hunting. He killed a rabbit. He brought it back to this

administrators house. He tied that rabbit by means of a long string down the chimney of the house and the fire place was there and the rabbit was just above the fire place in the chimney. The administrator had to keep his windows open the whole month of January and part of February because that rabbit was hanging in the chimney and he couldn't figure what that awful smell was.

Q: Where would I ever get a story like that? Who could ever make up a story like that.

A: That was the truth. I'm not mentioning any names.

Q: I understand very well.

A: Then there was another time when David Rands, and Bill Probst (sp and myself. They were always giving me a hard time. Mailing me all kinds of things in the campus mail. One day Bill mailed me a board about 8 inches long and 2 inches wide. He mailed it to me and I mailed it back. That board went back between me, Bill, and David Rands for about four years in the mail and the mail clerk kept carrying it. It's a wonder we didn't get fired. Finally the mail the head mailman woke up to what was going on. He stopped the practice at once.

There was a little blond fellow in the Chemistry Department. I mailed him my wifes discarded girdle one time and he was in a group of people and he opened up this package and pulled out that girdle. This man was an old bachelor. He pulled that girdle out and these guys had a fit.

He really got teased, boy was he mad! me over and he wanted to fight me. Those days were fun days and we had more work than we could handle, but somehow we did it. And we didn't get paid much. It was fun. A real challenge.

{It was frequently said in those days that all of our problems would be over when we all were together on the Edwardsville campus, but, of course, that was not true.}

Q: A few comments on the transition to Edwardsville in fall of '65.

A: I don't think we were quite prepared for classes to be held during the fall of '65 because all you need to do is to remember that long line of students from the Peck bldg. out to the highway for 2 miles. Mudd ankle deep and we had to use tents in some places for certain functions and the classrooms weren't finished. My office wall fell in on me one day. I just happened to push my chair back and that whole panel came falling right down across my desk. Things like that. We weren't quite ready for fall of '65.

Q: I started in Peck and they were still working on it.

A: Yes they were. Some of the restrooms weren't ready.

Q: The whole university was Peck and about two-thirds of the library.

A: That's right. That's right. No parking lights even. Several times I went home at noon to change my clothes because they were muddy from walking across the field from my car.

Q: Any other reflections on the transition?

A: That was the biggest in my mind. We weren't ready for that number of people.

Q: When did you not have to rely on Carbondale so much?

A: About in 1965, 1966, '67 we weaned ourselves away Carbondale. In the early days we used to call them 8 or 9 times a day over a problem. How do I do this? What does this mean? But by '67 we gained enough knowledge, enough machines, enough expertise to do our own work.

Q: There was one ditto machine for Humanities and the Social Sciences and in my first office in Alton three of us shared a typewriter. (phone ring) I presume your equipment was at times about that primitive.

A: Yes it was. In fact in 1957 down in East St. Louis two or three people shared a desk. I remember Tom Evans and two or three other faculty members shared the same desk down there in the Student Affairs Office.

We were short of everything in those days, desks, chairs, papers everything. Harking back to my army days when they said a good soldier is never without a rifle, a bucket, a mop or whatever he needed, I filled my office full of furniture by simply going out and scouting during the lunch hour and after work and hand carrying them back to my office, like chairs, desks, couches; and that's the

way you got things in those days. You always had to lock your office up when you were gone because if you didn't your desk or your chair might be gone and you could never get it back from whoever had it. A moonlight requisition is what it was called in those early days.

And of course the poor fellows who had the job of keeping tabs of all the desks would put little tags on them. Well if you were pretty good at it you would tear those little tags off--they were made out of paper those days, tear them off and who could prove where that came or that desk or that lounge or that table. A lot of people did that.

Q: All right Dorrie give me any other final memories you'd care to share with us.

A: If I had my life to live over again at SIUE I would do the same thing again. I had the best of two worlds of administration and teaching and I loved it. I loved it.

Q: I can't think of a more appropriate and better end than that my good friend Dorrie Wilton and so let us end on that.

A

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