

7-18-1991

## Raines, Ethel - Oral History Interview

Southern Illinois University Edwardsville

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ORAL HISTORY

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SIUE ORAL HISTORY PROJECT

Summers, 1990, 91

Ethel Raines Interview, July 18, 1991

Interviewed by Stanley B. Kimball

Filename: RAINES. 718

Q: Ethel Raines, thank you for this phone interview from El Paso and for being willing to share your memories and reflections in this fashion about the university we've both devoted so much of our time to. Tell us how you came to SIU when back when anyway?

A: I had just moved to the area and I had been employed by the University Civil Service system in Springfield. I heard there was a new campus starting in Edwardsville.

Q: When had you moved to Edwardsville?

A: 1958. When I began to ask about it I was told to go to Alton to apply. So I went to the Business Office at Alton and Morris Carr was administering the Civil Service test at that time. I later had to go to Carbondale and take one or two tests.

I worked at the Alton Business Office for a very short time and then was transferred to the East St. Louis Business Office. I worked for Lionel Howell in East St. Louis. Gene Turner was the Registrar and Lionel was Business Officer for the East. St. Louis campus. Lionel is deceased now.

Gene Turner became the first Director of Personnel on the Edwardsville campus. But I worked at East St. Louis at Rock Junior for a year before they transferred us to one of the houses off the Edwardsville campus.

Q: Briefly at least you worked in all three centers Alton, East St. Louis, and Edwardsville.

A: Very briefly at Alton. I wasn't there very long at all, about a week or two maybe before I went to East St. Louis.

Q: Where had you worked before coming here?

A: At the Division of Services for Crippled Children at the University of Illinois in Springfield, Illinois.

Q: And then your husband's work, is that what brought you to Edwardsville?

A: Yes.

Q: I came in '59 not very long after you.

A: I thought you had been there about that long.

Q: Yes, I feel like everybody's grandfather now. There's only two or three still in harness from those days.

A: Yes, I know I keep in touch. So I know how few there are.

Q: Walk us briefly through the various assignments and titles and all that you had. Most of it was in the Business Office I presume?

A: Yes. Well, in East St. Louis I was Secretary III at that time. We did textbooks, registration fees; everything was handled through the Business Office there. The Registrar's Office shared our office space. Gene Turner was the Registrar at East St. Louis and that's how I became acquainted with Gene. Then when they started our own Personnel Office there we began administering civil service exams at Edwardsville. They moved us to that place that's across from what used to be the vice presidents office. It sits up on a hill.

Q: Yes

A: That's where we were first. While we were in East St. Louis our payroll was handled completely by Carbondale. No one at the Edwardsville campus had anything to with payroll, except just to turn in time. When we moved out to Edwardsville, they decided that we could give our own Civil Service exams so Gene and I had to be trained for that. Gene Turner was first director and he asked me if I'd like to work for him. It was a choice of that or the Accounting Office..

After we had done that for a very short time they said they thought we should begin to take responsibility for our own payroll. I really got involved in that, but I don't remember exactly how long we were at that office. The last year or so we were there, that's a

two story house, they took the back two rooms and put Technical and Adult Education in there with Casstevens , Dale Blount, and Francine Marti. They shared the building for the rest of the time we were there. Then they moved us over to track forty two. Know where that is?

Q: Well not exactly.

A: Close to the Alton road. Something else went in there after we did, I think the Accounting Office maybe for awhile. But that's when they separated payroll and personnel.

Q: I see.

A; And I chose to go with payroll. I eventually became the Payroll Officer for the Edwardsville campus.

Q: And was that your position when you retired?

A: Yes.

Q: You retired when?

A: 1980.

Q: You were here 22 years. Why did you stay so long?

A: I enjoyed it. I enjoyed every minute of my job and I enjoyed the university, a lot. It just suited me.

Q: Well that listens good. That will sound good on tape and it will look great in the typed transcript of this.

A: I worked with some of the nicest people and I made some marvelous friends through my associations there. They are all pretty good memories.

Q: Well, I'm glad to hear it. I've stayed here that long myself. Quite a few people have. I haven't been able to pry much negative stuff out of people. Either they won't, or I don't ask them to be interviewed, or they won't be interviewed or they prefer not to say. What ever the reasons are, it's pretty upbeat and that's a pleasant assignment to hear all these nice stories.

Now another general, but good question, over those 22 years what do you think were your most significant contributions to building this place from scratch.

A: They didn't even own all the land for the campus when I came. They hadn't finished the buying of all the land when I came out there. And I think without sounding like I'm patting myself on the back, that we did a good job of setting up the Civil Service system on the campus and I think we did a very good job of establishing the Payroll Office and handling all the payroll matters. I had the least turnover in my office, I think of any office on the campus.

Q: Well that's any achievement.

A: I felt like it was.

Q: Did set up the whole Civil Service system?

A: Yes. Gene Turner and I made many a trip to Champaign to learn how to give the test what we needed to do and how to abide by the rules. They were strictly enforcing them because we were a new campus and they wanted us to get off on the right foot. And then of course we had to learn how to manage the retirement system and their requirements also because we did all the paperwork for that. We also at that time were handling all the insurance that there was on the campus because we didn't have a separate insurance office or retirement office or anything. It was all done in our office so we got well rounded experience.

Q: Any other things along this line you'd like to add about your significant contributions to this university?

A: No. I think that's about it. I think the university is still making strides. I don't think any one person is indispensable and I really think they are really going ahead. I think they've been a god send to the community there.

Q: What in your opinion has been the contributions made by this university to our area?

A: Well, I think one of the big contributions is financial. What did Edwardsville have going for it that was as great a benefit as the financial benefit that came from the university?

Q: All right. Good point.

A: And then there are cultural benefits. I think there were people in town who didn't realize all the things that the university would bring to the community. I remember when they were starting it there were a lot of people who really didn't want the university, but I believe most of them changed their minds.

Q: Why do you think that they did not want the university?

A: I think they were a afraid of it.

Q: Can you be specific?

A: You hear these stories about how students get out on the town and they destroy things and I think, I really think, they in Edwardsville were reluctant to see that come to their community. Also, I think college towns historically have reputation of being expensive places to live. I think they were also afraid of that. And then there were some politics of course as there always are.

Q: I know that the merchants have are concerned over our little bookstore here taking business away and I know we were never permitted to have overnight accommodations because of the hotel/motel

people. Perhaps those were part of their fears. Well, you've specified Edwardsville, but I presume much of what you've say you would agree was true of all south western Illinois.

A: Yes, when I say Edwardsville and talk about the campus I mean the area really.

Q: What gave you the greatest satisfaction over the twenty two years you were here?

A: Oh, I think doing a job that I really enjoyed and that I felt I was performing as well as anybody could expect. I think that's the greatest thing, that I know I did everything that could have been done in that area and that's a big satisfaction to me. I do not have to be ashamed of anything I did on my job at SIU.

Q: Were you honored or respected for it?

A: I'm not so sure about that. Payroll is not high on the list for most people. It's a necessary function but I don't think the Payroll Office even today is given enough credit for the way it handles the payroll functions for the campus.

Q: Do you this implies that you feel its taken for granted.

A: Yes. Yes. There were times I tried to tell people that that's not the way that's handled and they would remind me that I did not call shots. They were called by somebody else. Those are the only frustrations I think I really had.

Q: You've implied being taken for granted or people going over your head. What were some other frustrations you had.

A: Oh I really can't think of any. I really don't know that I have, those I think were the only kinds of frustrations I really had. I had a satisfactory number of people working for me. We got the job done and we did it in a very good manner. But other than these political pressures and the frustrations over those things are the only sad ones I have.

Q: All right.

A: I try not to dwell on those.

Q: You mentioned politics? Since you were here '58 you certainly know that there were lots of politics from Carbondale and Springfield and here and Morris and Harold See. How were you affected by those things?

A: Well, I think maybe in knowing that we had to do some things that all of us knew weren't done just by the book, not a lot of them, but and I don't mean to infer that we broke any laws or anything like that. I'm not saying that at all. But the university was

forced, I say forced, what do I know, to put some people on the payroll who were friends of "somebody" or relatives of somebody and at times when we all were sure there was someone else who was more qualified.

Q: Well that's typical politics all right.

A: Have you talked to Gene Peebles?

Q: No.

A: You know he was so instrumental in that campus. And have you talked to Gene Turner?

Q: No.

A: Last I knew about Gene Turner he was at the University of Oklahoma, but as far as what I did those two men were responsible for what I learned and what I did. And by the way you know I said we went right from East St. Louis to Edwardsville. We didn't, we spent a year at the Alton, what they called the Alton Brickyard.

Q: Oh I remember that.

A: The Purchasing Office, the Accounting Office, and the Personnel Office

nPersonnel Office were all in there in that building.

Q: Gene Peebles, do you have any idea where he is?

A: He's retired and he's in southern Illinois. I don't know exactly where, but Ruth Eidson would know. Because she and her family and Gene's family have kept in touch. I do know that he's retired and living in southern Illinois somewhere.

Q: Your best memories?

A: Oh, I think experiencing the growth in all ways of the university and in friendships that I've made that are lifetime friendships.

Q: Did you ever take any classes?

A: Oh yes. I took several classes and really enjoyed them and today when I think about it the one I enjoyed most, of course I enjoyed my accounting classes a lot and but I think for pure enjoyment the class I enjoyed most Greek Drama with David Butler. He was good. He was a good instructor. Is he still there?

Q: Dave is now Dean of Humanities.

A: Oh is he.

Q: Your worst memories?

A: Well I don't know that I could pick out any one thing and say it was my worst memory. There were a couple of times when, here was one time when a faculty member really, really took me task because the tax law had changed in between the time the payroll was earned and the payroll was paid and we had to tax her the higher tax and oh man did I take it then. She was really irate and she wanted to talk to my boss. Then there was one time when an administrator, over my trying to say what was right and his idea of what was right, and that's the only time in my life that I've ever left a job crying, but I went home that day in tears because he really read me the riot act, no uncertain terms. But that's all. I had good cooperation with the Personnel Office. We worked closely with them because the two offices really dovetailed. One really needs the other in both ways. I really don't have, I don't think, any other bad memories. And I don't dwell on the others.

Q: Well a lot of people have told me that they've pretty much forgotten those things, but it's still part of our history.

A: Yes.

Q: How about some humorous or strange or unusual things during your 22 years here?

A: Oh I wish that I had kept a book. You know I wish I had jotted down things like this in a diary or something because you have a tendency to forget those too.

Q: Yes.

A: I've had my thinking cap on and I really can't remember anything other than that.

Q: We have an official history of SIU. I was asked to write it. I didn't want to do it because I felt I'd be too limited and anyway Dave Butler did and did a good job. But it is an official history and therefore there's a lot of things it doesn't contain. If you were able to update it or what would you like to report that might never make it in an official history, some experiences, some personal experiences that might be of interest or value, however not in an official history? Does that jog your memory at all?

A: No, not really. Due to the nature of the Payroll Office, we were quite removed from the campus itself at that time. It did not move on campus until after I had retired so we really were removed from an awful lot of the daily things. I do remember at one time when we were there in the Wagner Complex in Edwardsville that our office had swinging doors that were just cafe type, half way you know.

Q: Um-hmm.

A: A streaker ran down the hall one day and of course I had my nose down doing something or other, but we heard the other offices say here comes the streaker and he hopped from door to door. I remember that.

Q: I think that goes back to some of this humorous stuff I was fishing around for.

A: Yes. Other than that, we really didn't get a lot of what went on out on campus.

Q: I would imagine in payroll you might have had all kinds of grumps and complaints.

A: Yes, but most people would maybe would question you in depth, but they usually accepted what you said as being the only way we could go. We were a state agency. We had to abide by the state rules on these things. We didn't have a choice. We had to do it when the state said we had to do it. So it wasn't anything I did.

I realized that when you're expecting a paycheck that you know is going to be a magnificent summer paycheck that's going to be magnificent size then you see this big chunk of tax out of it and you think I earned this before the tax was effective, but the tax was effective with the first paycheck issued after it had become effective which meant we had to take the new tax out of that paycheck.

Q: Yes.

A: And that was difficult for some people, but we tried very hard to eliminate all this understanding, tried regularly when there was going to be any kind of a change, tried to spell out in detail to the

faculty members and all other employees of the university exactly when this was going to take place and how it was going to affect them.

I remember Jim Comer one time wrote me a note that said thanks for such a clear explanation of this. He said he appreciated my efforts to keep them posted on everything that was going on with their paychecks. I felt that was important.

Q: You told us a little bit about you worked for Morris Carr and Gene Turner and Gene Peebles. Let's go back to those early days and get some of your reflections on Harold See or Dean Going or Delyte Morris. Are there some things you could share, some memories or personal experiences that might add to our understanding of the early days with those people?

A: I didn't have any contact at all with President Morris. My daughter-in-law was for a time a secretary in his office on the Edwardsville campus. She worked for Charles Butler. But I didn't have any contact with him at all.

Q: Well how about some others?

A: And Dean Going...

Q: See.

A: ...I worked with a lot in developing our Civil Service system and our payroll. We also took over the preparation of all sabbatical notes. And Dean Going was always a perfect gentleman. He was great to work with. If I ever had a problem that I felt someone else should resolve that was in his area, I would just refer them to him. He was fantastic to work with.

And Dr. See I didn't have any connection with him either even though we were across the road there from where he was for that year or so we were there in that house. I didn't see Dr. See very often and I didn't have much connection with him.

Q: Did you have many professional relations with with greater Edwardsville say, connected with your work?

A: Not at all.

Q: Your work was almost entirely pertaining just to the campus.

A: That's right.

Q: Did you have much to do with students?

A: Well of course we did student payroll.

Q: I see.

A: In that respect and I used a student employee from time to time in the office. Through the student payroll we got involved with those students who were working on payroll, not with any others.

Q: Were there any unusual things with student payroll that you can remember, any problems there?

A: No. That was our smallest payroll and I think we made more changes in the way the student payroll was handled in our office than we did in any other payroll while I was there. I'm sure we had them from day to day, explanations for things they couldn't understand and things like that but I don't remember any really bad things from that either.

Q: Well what I seem to be hearing, Ethel, is that you were professional and proficient and did your job and were happy and pretty much content and it went fairly smoothly.

A: Yes. I really enjoyed my work at the University. I enjoyed the University community and it was a good experience.

Q: Well you mentioned the University community, socializing I presume and on and off campus.

A: More on a professional basis. I worked such long hours in the Personnel Office when we were getting started because there was just Gene and I and at that time there wasn't money to hire anybody else. Sometimes I would get out to the office at seven in the morning

and Gene would already be at his desk and there were many times that we worked until seven or eight at night and we gave Civil Service tests at night sometimes.

I'll never forget I was hospitalized once. I guess that was the first year we were responsible for collecting our own tax information for W-2s.

Q: Um-hmm.

A: I was the only one that had done anything at all on it and when I went to the hospital and had to stay longer than expected, put that stuff in a big envelope and gave it to my husband because at that time I was able to sit up and do things. And Mike brought it over to the hospital and I finished checking them out so we could say okay go ahead and print our W-2s. I'll never forget that.

Q: You've mentioned Civil Service again. I understand academic life pretty well and I'm fairly acquainted with administration, but I'm not sure people really know just to what an extent Civil Service plays a role in a university. Can you tell us a little bit about that?

A: Well if you didn't have the back up people, support from the Civil Service staff, the university really couldn't function adequately. I think that not just the Personnel Office and the Benefits Office but also all of the Civil Service people, all of the Civil Service employees on campus contribute more than a lot of people in the academic area realize.

Q: Now that expression you used, back up; that's very eloquent and I'm sure we don't really understand it, to enable us to do what we do.

A: Um-hmm.

Q: Well....

A: All the secretaries and all the typists and the administrative aids, those people are all Civil Service people and if you didn't have some rules governing the hiring at the campus, I think it could be pretty disastrous. I think political pressure would be terrific if you did not have the Civil Service system in Champaign to fall back on sometimes.

Q: In what way?

A: In hiring and selecting candidates for the job, things like that.

Q: If we got the wrong Civil Service people, we'd be in serious trouble?

A: Yes. I think that's true.

Q: You just don't dismiss Civil Service people.

A: That's right. That's right. That's one of the drawbacks. You can if it's done properly.

Q: Yes.

A: But sometimes the person who's wanting to get rid of a poor employee does not want to do it properly so of course that's a personnel problem. That wasn't my problem after we got out of personnel.

Q: What's your general impression of the whole Civil Service aspect of this campus over the years you were here? Did it function well, what's your feelings on that?

A: I think they were a very important part of the establishment and growth of the campus. All the grounds people, all the maintenance people, all the health employees, all the health service employees, all the cafeteria people and now you have some Civil Service people out in the dormitories.

Q: The Civil Service story has to be told, along with the academic and administrative. So what else would you like to record about the Civil Service aspect of the significance the size the evolution whatever you think deserves to be recorded?

A: That's difficult to answer for me because I've been away from it long enough now, but I don't believe the campus could have developed as well, not in the academic area and the administrative area, but in everything else, I don't believe they could have developed as well as they did if they had not had an adequate Civil Service force.

I know there were many times when there was not enough salary money to have enough bodies to do the work that should have been done by civil service people. That was soon overcome. But we worked several years short handed because of that. But other than that I think that the contribution of the Civil Service force is many times overlooked.

Q: Now you mentioned a half hour or more ago that for a season you administered a lot of the test and hired and in effect set the Civil Service program. Now tell us a little about how many, the trials and tribulations and joys and successes of setting up this Civil Service program. Was it difficult to get qualified people and how many did you have to reject?

A: We had a top administrator who said you don't need to go by these rules because you can go out on the street corner and pick up typists for a hundred dollars a month. We fought that. And that was the very top man, that was his idea at that time. He objected sometimes to the fact that we had to abide by Civil Service rules. We were a state university we had to abide by the University Civil Service rules. They are a separate entity from state civil service.

I don't remember numbers. Gene Turner might have a better memory than I about numbers. I know we tested a lot of people. At that time I don't think we were turning away as many as they probably are today because we didn't have as many applying. Until the university became known as the employer that it is we really didn't have that many although we had a lot. One of our toughest times was when they brought in the unions and the craftsmen.

Q: Why was that?

A: Because they, the unions, did not agree that their people should be covered by Civil Service, thought they should be hired out of the union hall and that went against the Civil Service rules.

Q: Don't the two work together?

A: Well theoretically, but not always.

Q: I see.

A: That was a struggle to get to the point where they are now. These people came to realize that we had to do this by the rules that the university Civil Service had set down.

Q: When you say where they are now, what does that mean?

A: I think they understand better today. I can't speak to that except in various loose conversation. But I think the union people understand better today that they can't handle union employees in the campus like they handle union employees outside the campus. With their union hall practices and all of that.

Q: How would you characterize the overall relations between and among the civil service segment and the academic and the administrative during your twenty two years in the system?

A: For the most part it was very good. In my particular position there were certain people academically or administratively that we knew when we contacted them we had to use their title or they would correct us if we said Mr. or Mrs. They would say it is not Mr. it is Dr. We knew which ones they were and I always alerted my clerks if you call that person be sure this is the way you address them. But there weren't a lot of those people. There weren't at that time. Most of the people were really while they might not understand our problems, knew we had a good reason for doing what we did.

Q: Well, that's an important reflection because I'm sure that at certain times and places there have been real problems between and among the three different dimensions of the university.

A: I think you're right about that. I think the Personnel Office itself as it is today takes a lot of criticism but they do not deserve about things that they really have no control over.

Q: Because they have to enforce state rules.

A: That's right.

Q: That they don't make.

A: That's right. I think that they get criticized and it allready was that way when I left there. I don't think that got any better. I think they need to be defended in a lot of things that they do.

Q: Well that's a good point. Now any looking back over our conversation here of almost an hour here Ethel, something you'd like to add to any of the questions that we've addressed or questions unaddressed or what would you like to say about anything else?

A: I think we've covered just about everything. I do get out on campus when I come back but I don't get around to see everybody I use to know out there.

Q: Yes, I'm sure you couldn't.

A: I have very good friends there so I try to get out on campus when ever I'm back.

Q: For my immediate point of view, my immediate impression is that what you've given us all through this interview larger focused on Civil Service which is exactly where it was suppose to focus because

obviously I interview faculty and administrators but I'm trying to get some balance in this thing. I want the Civil Service side of the story told. Now if my tape recorder is working and I keep checking and as far as I can tell it is, it looks like at least I have the beginnings of the Civil Service story around here.

A: I really do think that if you can you should talk to Gene Turner and Gene Peebles.

Q: Well I have noted that and as you can appreciate there's the question of balance. I try to keep a gender balance. I try to keep an ethnic balance. I try to keep an East St. Louis, Alton, and Edwardsville balance. I try to keep a school and a discipline and an administrative.

A: You don't have a very easy job.

Q: Well its a very pleasant way to spend the summer, but I do try to keep this thing in balance and so far it's working out pretty well and I always ask people for two or three names which you've given me two excellent ones and as the work progresses and I see that I can work in a little more on this topic those will certain be the men I'll go to or the people I'll go to.

A: Gene Peebles was there when I came and he of course was the financial officer for so long there that his memory of the early days at SIU would be valuable.

Q: I remember Gene quite well. I don't remember Gene Turner very well I think he was in East St. Louis.

A: Well he was East St. Louis and Alton and then Edwardsville. Both of them went to Carbondale for awhile. Then Gene Turner left the university and went to the University of Oklahoma. I don't know whether he's still there or not.

Q: For what ever reasons I remember Peebles better.

A: Well I think he was more visible. He had to be, just by the nature of his work.

Q: Well Ethel thanks any final words you'd like to add to this?

A: I don't think so.

Q: Let me thank you again for sharing this with us.

A: Your very welcome. It's been a nice trip down memory lane.

Q: All right thank you so much Ethel.

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