

Earl Lazerson, President of SIUE, 1980-1993.
Transcript of Interview for 50th Anniversary History of SIUE
Interviewer Ellen Nore-Nordhauser
January 30th, 2007

Ellen Nore [EN]: It's January 30th, 2007. This is Ellen Nore-Nordhauser. I'm interviewing Professor Earl Lazerson. Formerly, President of SIUE. For the 50th Anniversary History of the University. [Recording stops]

Earl Lazerson [EL]: And, ah, the only. I can't think of anything that really is off the record, except that from time to time, I'm going to have to make comments probably about people. And then, ah, those will probably be off the record.

EN: Alright, well. I I transcribe this, and I send you a copy. And then, you can change or delete or do anything to it.

EL: Well, I don't like to do that.

EN: Well, it's your intellectual property.

EL: Well...

EN: You know, you're creating a source [EL laughs].

EL: Yeah, it's, I understand. But ah.

EN: Most modern history, you know, depends on people like you who are willing to talk about the past.

EL: Right, I understand that. Well, it it...

EN: It is really an honor to see you. I know.

EL: Don't say that!

EN: Yes, no! This is fantastic [EN laughs]!

EL: Well, you were always one of my favorite people at the university. I I mean you've always had such an optimistic and upbeat view of things. And and Norman [Nordhauser] was really the same way. I mean, you were both delightful people. Ah, too, ah, there are a couple of sources that I'm sure you're aware of, but I'll just mention them in case not. Ah, one is that, at the time that I retired, my recollection is that they did a booklet. I don't know if you've seen it or not. It's called, *The Lazerson Years*.

EN: Oh, yes. I've seen that! Good.

EL: Okay. Good. Okay.

EN: Sam Smith loaned me a copy of it.

EL: Oh, okay. Okay. I just wanted.

EN: And I took notes on it.

EL: Sure.

EN: I had already taken notes on it in the archives, actually.

EL: Okay. Okay. Number two. Ah, you remember Louisa Bowen, ah, lovely lady. She, ah, the, almost immediately after I retired, she sat down with me for an extensive series of interviews, ah, and she recorded it and transcribed it the same kinda thing. Those are in, I guess, in a sealed part of the Archives. And the way I set it up was: I gave them whatever papers I had, together with this thing, and my recollection is that they're not supposed to be accessed until 2025.

EN: Mhm.

EL: But ah, the reason I mention it is, it might be interesting for you at some point in the future, when they're available.

EN: Sure.

EL: To take a look and see how often I contradict myself. [EN and EL both laugh] So, those things are available.

EN: Okay.

EL: Ah, now, in terms of other things ah, that came to mind as I went through your questions: Creation of the School of Engineering. A high point, of course, was when I got the BHE [Board of Higher Education] to drop their embargo against housing.

EN: Okay.

EL: At the university, and got the Board [of Trustees] to accept housing and actually got approval to move ahead with the building. Um, let's see. Ah, the whole issue of where SIUE faculty stood in regard to other faculty members in the state versus salary. Ah, the issue of tuition and fees. Now, now let me go back to the salaries. The reason I bring that up is that it was very important to *me* to ensure that we maintained as high a level of faculty salaries as we could. And as a matter of fact, we were the second-highest in the state, after the University of Illinois, which caused no end of problems with Carbondale [EN laughs]. Ah, and as a matter of fact, my own view is that, if there was a reason ah, why our folks did not go union, that [salary] probably had a great deal to do with it. You know, I think that.

EN: I suggest that it did, you know ultimately. In the second [union] election, by then it [new salary increments] had begun to come in.

EL: Yes. Exactly. And, of course, if you look at the subsequent history ah, of what occurred at Carbondale, even with getting ah, the unionization, ah, it doesn't seem to me that it really did them much good. If anything, I'm not sure that it didn't do some positive harm there.

EN: Mhm.

EL: Um, tuition and fees. I always operated on a view that it was extremely important for the institution to maintain as low a schedule of tuition and fees that we could. And the reason for that ah, was that we were dealing with a population that really didn't have the where-with-all ah, you know, to provide monies at a level that are more ah, average, ah, with regard to sending kids to school. And ah, so, I thought that that issue was extremely important on the fee side. I always felt that if if we were going to spend students' money, particularly on large projects, it was extremely important to get their perspective. It was their money. They ought to have a right to say how the money was utilized. So, for example, when we built the rec building [Student Fitness Center], I had a referendum with regard to that. It turned out that the students were very much in favor, but if they had not been, I would not have gone ahead with the rec building. Because they paid for it.

EN: This is the Student Fitness Center or the...no the Vadalabene Center?

EL: Or, I'm sorry. Not the Vadalabene, but the Student Fitness Center.

EN: Okay.

EL: Okay, ah, I was very happy to get Arts and Issues in place. Interesting story. Um, I went to Jerry Hollenhorst [EL laughs], who was then the President of the Faculty Senate, and I said, "Jerry, I'll fund it, if you can get it through the Senate," and he got it through the Senate. And I funded it, and I think it's been a great thing for the institution. University Park. EN: Yeah, I mention that.

EL: I'm very ah, pleased with how that has developed. And I think, that, that was part, by the way, of a, ah, tri-partite or quadri-partite attempt to get Southwestern Illinois moving economically. That, the creation of the Southwestern Illinois Development Authority, attempting to do something about ah, the economic status of East St. Louis—those things were all of a piece. And that, that's how I viewed them in my own mind, um, and they were all part, also, of a outreach to the general region, I, I think that the university for many years... Oh, I see Anne is ah, you may want to stop it for a minute she's bringing in the tea.

EN: Okay. [Recording stops]

EL: ...things, and in particular, making some inroads in terms of what I regarded was a very insular view in St. Louis with regard to Southern Illinois and the university. Ah, so, I worked very hard ah, at making sure... I went on a kinda propaganda campaign. It took about five years,

ah, but I think that it was successful in the sense that, ah, by the mid-1980s, ah, people in the region had a much clearer picture of the capabilities of the University etcetera. Um, I was very concerned about striking a proper balance between academics and athletics. And that was one of the situations which ah, unfortunately, I had to, to terminate an Athletic Director.

EN: I write about that actually, I have to think about that [Ken] Flack and [Robert] Seguso.

EL: Yes. Yes, exactly right.

EN: I had a big interview with Cindy Jones, she was really great.

EL: Good. Ah, but that was, you know, a situation in which, clearly, ah, academic rules had been broken. And ah, we just could not.

EN: Yes.

EL: Then ah...

EN: And what year was that? [EL laughs] I've tried to find out exactly what year it was, you know, you know, there wasn't that much in the files about it.

EL: It would have had to of been ah, maybe around.

EN: Cause, I'd like to look in the Globe-Democrat. I went over there and looked at a lot of things, and ah.

EL: Oh, and the student newspaper must have had stuff about it.

EN: Yeah, the Alestle, but I just wanted to know which years, because...

EL: I wanna, the safe thing for me would, to say about 1985.

EN: Okay.

EL: Because that's sort-of in the middle of that decade and, but, and I can't. I'm not really good now at remembering dates.

EN: Oh, I'm not either so. [EN laughs]

EL: Right.

EN: Although, I'm a historian. [EL laughs] But yeah. So [Lynn] Lashbrook was in there for four years, as [Athletic Director] for about four years ah.

EL: Yes, that sounds right. Yeah.

EN: The guy that was fired, I can't remember his name.

EL: Right.

EN: But I would have it in the. In the comments. Cindy [Jones] became Director in '88.

EL: Yeah. She was very good director.

EN: For twelve years.

EL: Yeah, she was very good. Um, and I'll mention, ah, let's see. I think, on the phone, you asked me about goals, and the, it's funny, but at the time, you've got it back on?

EN: Yeah, it's on.

EL: Oh, Okay. Okay. At the time that ah, I was appointed President, I had written down on a sheet of paper....

EN: Lemme get a.

EL: ...twelve things....

EN: Oh, yes.

EL: ...that I had wanted to accomplish. Now, the interesting thing is that I know that I accomplished all twelve. [EN laughs] What is not so interesting is that right now, with difficulty, I could recreate the list in my head. But ah, you know we can talk about that.

EN: This was while you were Provost. I think you sent a list of goals to Buzz [President Kenneth] Shaw.

EL: That's right.

EN: Of these twelve goals.

EL: Yes. Yes.

EN: And, as usual, he wrote, "Good job, Earl!" [EN and EL laugh]

EL: Did he really?

EN: Yes! I just, the... the files are full of you and very little of him. And most of it says, "Good." "Good Earl!" And, "Keep going!" You know! [EN and EL both laugh]

EL: Alright, ah, now I want to mention ah, Earl Beard.

EN: Yes.

EL: Because he ah, Earl was an enormous inspiration to me. He was a friend, a mentor. Ah, I can, cannot say enough about Earl. He ah, he touched me in ways that very few people have. There were other, ah, you know, people that I worked with who were very helpful. I've mentioned Jerry Hollenhorst. Or Sid Deny was a great Faculty Senate President.

Ah, I guess I shouldn't spend time on that. I should go back to your questions.

EN: No, you don't. You can spend any time however you wanna spend the time.

EL: Well, let me try and, I, let me reserve myself until last because that's probably the least interesting thing here, or I mean will be for others, but ah, I'll start with Question two. Well, in working with John Rendleman. John was a very charismatic figure. He was clearly not very much interested in, in the academic side of the institution. My personal interaction with him started when I was Dean of the School of Technology, so that would have been 1974 or 1975. Ah, I had put together, with ah, the help of Bill Hoard, who was the Chairman of the Engineering Department and with ah, Dave Werner and somebody in his shop - whose name I can't remember now, ah, a new degree program. Ah, it was called Construction Engineering. Ah, and it's ah, there were very few such programs in the United States at that time. But since then, it's gotten very popular. But in any event, I recall there was a luncheon meeting someplace, and ah, I think that's where I probably first really talked to Rendleman. Ah, and he was very happy that this had occurred. This sort of interaction between ah, the Department of Engineering, and the School of Business. Ah, and about maybe six months after that, he asked me to come and visit with him, and he said, ah, "I would like you to think about doing something with other institutions in the State relative to energy." And I asked him, "Can you sort of expand on that?" Well, I'm not sure that I, I got a clear picture, but he sort of gave me my marching orders. I can remember when I left his office, he said, "Lazerson, I want you to go out and bring home the bacon." [EN and EL both laugh] I remember that very well, ah, what I did, following that meeting, was sometime later. I set up a.

EN: [Humming background noise] That's my tape recorder. I don't know what that is?

EL: It's okay. [Recording stops] [sent up a meeting] with other Deans of Engineering in the State, ah, and we got together, and we had several meetings, as I recall, ah, to talk about what the Universities might do relative to energy programs and, and things of that sort. Nothing much really came of it.

EN: Okay.

EL: But ah, John was very pleased with that. Ah, then ah, I was asked to serve on this committee that you allude to. And I'm trying to get this, the timing on this in my head. That would have been set up I think in the fall of...

EN: '75.

EL: Exactly, yeah. And as you say, Vaughnie Lindsay was the chair. I was a member. I don't really remember, ah, the other... There were members of course. There was a very distinguished professor at Carbondale, an older man, ah, who was on it, ah, and some other people. Now my recollection, Ellen, is that the purpose of that was to sort through the succession to Rendleman. Ah, now, I mean others may have a better remembrance of the specifics, but I am almost positive that we were, that our job was to look into several people who whom Rendleman had recommended to the Board of Trustees. And the recommend... He was recommending them, presumably, to serve as President.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: When he departed.

EN: Yes.

EL: Am I right?

EN: Well, ah, the memos that I've seen that he drafted said that the committee was supposed to watch him work and when you thought he wasn't doing it anymore [Nore noted in her copy of the transcript, because of his illness. Rendleman had Cancer] of doing it any more...

EL: I think that was minor.

EN: Maybe that was re-written by Pete Simpson or something [EN laughs]

EL: No, it could've been. Yeah.

EN: I think he thought, for the committee, is that they were going to, because, "I want to do this because I love the job too much, and I I don't want to harm the University."

EL: Well, here was the situation.

EN: And he says that in the memo almost, he almost says that.

EL: Well, maybe you're right. Maybe I'm skipping ahead. I think maybe you're right.

EN: But, I don't know.

EL: No, I think you're right.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: No, I think you're right. I'm jumping ahead; we were still in existence, of course, when he passed away in March of 1976.

EN: Yes, early in March, he died.

EL: Oh, okay. Alright. Then, what occurred, ah, this is...see, what, what I'm trying to recall is the following: There were two people who had thrown their hats into the ring ah, for a succession.

EN: Well Kochman wanted to be President. Andrew Kochman.

EL: Well, he did. yes, he did very much so. He was a third one, but the other two. One was Deane Wiley.

EN: Yes, that's who I was gonna mention next.

EL: Yeah. And the other one was Rendleman's chief ah, assistant, whose name I can't...

EN: Tom Loeffler?

EL: No. No....no.

EN: Oh, okay um, oh.

EL You know who I'm talking about?

EN: [John] Metcalf?

EL: No, not Metcalf.

EN: The lawyer John Paul Davis?

EL: No.

EN: Um, Art [Arthur] Greist.

EL: No. This was a guy who was a, really, a political operative for Rendleman.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: Ah, okay.

EN: Anyway, it would have been another politician. I, I've seen the guy's name.

EL: That's right.

EN: He doesn't appear often in the files.

EL: No. He wouldn't, he wouldn't [EN laughs] but the point was ah, my recollection is that the committee ah, somehow or other ah, just indicated that, that an interim ah, you know President be appointed and that a full-blown search take place, which is what occurred.

EN: Yes.

EL: Ah, okay.

EN: Because they [The University] already had new rules for searches. In the new Affirmative Action Program.

EL: Exactly.

EN: That was part of it. So, it couldn't have been just another thing decreed.

EL: No. But, there was something that went on with Wiley and this other fellow. Ah.

EN: I'll, I'll remember his name one of these min, minutes maybe.

EL: I mean, it's no big deal. Okay. So, that was my ah, up to that point. That was my interaction with John until almost the very end.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: He called me at 6:00 one Saturday morning and asked me to come and see him, and he was in very bad shape at that point. And ah, I was with him, I would guess, for three or four hours, and he wanted to talk about the university and the future. Ah, and he was explaining to me about ah, how in his view ah, and I'll say this, but I would rather this be off the record.

EN: Okay.

EL: He, he didn't think that Andy could do the job.

EN: Oh. That wasn't an unusual opinion.

EL: No, no. I know. But I I'm not.

EN: I know, I don't get into that kind of thing in my account anyway.

EL: Okay. but in terms of the background.

EN: Yes.

EL: What struck me about it—I was absolutely flabbergasted. He was essentially on his last legs. In that, he would take the time to talk about this stuff. I just was sort of dumbfounded really. Because ah, at that time, I was still the the Dean of Science and Technology, and we hadn't had that much interaction, ah, you know, except for the few times that I've mentioned to you. But.

EN: Well, that was almost, maybe one of the very last appointment that he had with anyone.

EL: Was it really?

EN: Uh-huh. In his Appointment Book. And so that's why I thought, "Maybe he really picked this guy. You know. Maybe he really saw this guy as someone who was coming up.

EL: Well, he may have. But I think he was very careful not to, ah...

EN: He was probably still hoping that a miracle would happen.

EL: Yeah, and I. I'm sure he was. I mean, he was full of life right up to the end. But I I saw him in a different light that morning, that was ah. Okay, um. Well, I guess three, I've...

EN: Well, I've asked you about, um, ah, I've wrote. I've written a long chapter on, not as long as your chapter, but I've tried to say that I thought he was a very, a very strong President.

EL: Yes. He was.

EN: A very good President.

EL: He was.

EN: Ah, but that, when the he, when the financial crisis came, he didn't have the planning skills, ah...

EL: I think that's unfair.

EN: ...and I wondered. As a Dean, you were a Dean during the belt-tightening as it began to slide, and I wondered what it was like when the money began to go away. Or?

EL: Well, I can tell you what the impact was with regard to Science and Technology. You know, I think that, as as soon as I became the Dean and realized you know, the handwriting on the wall, I immediately took, I implemented steps, within the School, that mirrored what I later did in the University. Because my view was, that nobody is going to do this for us. I knew that. There there wasn't strong leadership. I'm not talking about John now, but about Academic Affairs.

EN: Yes.

EL: So it was extremely important to do what we could for ourselves. Ah, and I think that we were relatively successful, but ah, the budget situation, which is a story in itself, ah, was clearly going to play a major role in the university over a long period of time.

EN: Uh-huh. Okay.

EL: Um, um. I think you're right that Buzz Shaw did give me—He gave me the, the freedom, and the responsibility. I know. I think that [EN laughs]. Well, Buzz a joy to work with! I mean he was a great guy, he was just a wonderful human being. Ah, I knew, within a year of his arrival

on campus as President, that he would end up as ah, the System chancellor. It was just as clear as day. Ah, they were having a lot of problems at Carbondale. Ah, and Buzz was a very transparent, direct person, the kind that ah, a Board would have confidence in, ah, and I think he fulfilled their expectations when he moved into that slot. But ah, to tell you the truth, I was really sorry when he became Chancellor, not for him, but for myself and for the University, because I thought it would have been wonderful if he would have stayed on as President. I mean, he was just a truly exceptional person.

EN: The two of you really do seem to have been a wonderful team.

EL: Yeah, I think we.

EN: During that brief period.

EL: Yeah, we we ah, it it was terrific. But, nothing is forever. [EN laughs] Ah, you give me I see what is a kudo here, “as leader with what I think was a rare ability....blah blah blah” and “How did you formulate your goals?” Okay.

EN: I guess I’m asking if you, when did you decide you were really going to move up? And how did you, you have such an overview of the institution throughout your public documents? That I wondered, did you sit at home and you know, make little drawings and lists?

EL: Yeah, I I do a, no. I do a lot of thinking about things.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: I’m not ah, a prolific writer. I mean I don’t, most of my ah speeches etcetera, were off-the-cuff, many times, unfortunately. But ah, I think I tend to communicate better when I don’t prepare a script, it ah. But in terms of when did I start formulating? I guess, when I became the ah, the Provost ah, was when the full impact of both some of the negative aspects of our situation and what the real possibilities were for the future. I grew up in Detroit ah, you know in, during the Depression. My father was a, worked in ah tool and die shop. He was a union member. Ah, he was out of work for 10 years. Ah, so I had some sense of what it was like to be in distressed economic circumstances, and you know, this region had a very low graduation rate from high school, very few people went on to college or university. Ah, most of the people here, at least during my active years, were place-bound, ah, so it became very important that they had an institution like the university that could open up the world for them. And so that.

EN: Wayne State.

EL: Pardon me?

EN: Wayne State.

EL: Yeah, exactly. Ah, for me, was a very wonderful experience, and I felt the same thing could happen here. Remember that the university was actually created because a group of people, in Edwardsville.

EN: Yes.

EL: Petitioned the Governor to do something.

EN: Right.

EL: And I think it's extremely important to remember that, in talking about the history of the University, because it was out...it was that *need* that impelled them to do it. And, and my view was that the University needed, to somehow or other, to respond to that need, both in terms of students and in terms of the, the broader community. And so, the goals that I wrote down really had to do with that, to move the university into a position of increasing strength. I, I took very seriously the dictum that you cannot, you know, you can't walk. You've got to crawl before you walk. I don't mean that in any negative sense, but I think that we had to start building a solid foundation that would enable us over time, way beyond when I was here, to assume the mantle that I'd hoped the University would assume. Um, and part of that, and the most important part, was to get in place solid academic programs ah, that made sense for people here, for the region. So what ah. The thought that occurred to me was, "There is no reason why SIUE cannot have, you know, high-quality undergraduate programs, a select range of high-quality Masters' level programs, probably oriented towards the professions," and then, ah, I mean, we had the doctorate in Education. That needed either to be strengthened or to be gotten rid of. I mean it was. But I did not foresee at that point that we should be spinning our wheels in attempting to secure additional doctorates. That it was just not in the cards! The Board of Higher Education never would have gone for it. Our Board never would have gone for it because they didn't want any impediments to Carbondale.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: That's another long story.

EN: Yeah. But ah. So, I think that, first and foremost, what I tried to do was to set in place a vision of what the University could be within that programming context.

EN: Mm-hmm.

EL: And then really, everything else sort of flowed from that. Ah, the idea of the college of Arts and Sciences, going to a semester system. Ah, because it had always been my experience in other institutions that, that lent itself more readily to sustained learning. I could, you know. Some people have another perspective. I mean, I don't. This is not an ideology. I was trying to shake the institution up.

EN: Yep.

EL: Yes, ah. I think getting the embargo lifted on the housing was part of this. So all of these goals that really shaped my thinking, really, stemmed from the primary one, which was to provide quality education to, you know, the people that we served. And at the same time, to utilize the University as a resource for the community that we served. That, that was it.

EN: Great.

EL: Ah, okay. Let's see where we are here. Yeah. Okay. Ah, "A portion of the..." Oh, you mean unionization, well, I tell you the truth, ah, Buzz and I never did anything about unionization. Ah, you know, if it was going to happen, it was going to happen.

EN: Well, they spent a lot of money on that law firm.

EL: Oh.

EN: Seyforth, whatever it was.

EL: Yeah.

EN: But that was, that was very important to faculty members that, that was going on. I think.

EL: You mean like?

EN: That the System was spending money on a union-busting law firm.

EL: Oh, okay. I'm sorry.

EN: But I really was asking was...

EL: Yeah.

EN: ...how much of that was local level and how much was the System.

EL: Yeah, it was the System.

EN: Because it increased under Pettit.

EL: Yeah it was the System. Pettit and I to be very frank. And you don't have to put this in there.

EN: Okay.

EL: I. Petit and I never got along from day one. I mean, ah, we just didn't.

EN: Some people, in their interviews, have said that one of the good things you did was you kinda kept him at bay.

EL: Yeah, I know that I did. I mean, in the end, I hate to put it in crass terms, but the truth is: I won. He lost.

EN: [EN laughs] I got it. With the Board.

EL: With the board.

EN: Yes.

EL: And that was it. He made too many errors in terms of what he was attempting to do, in my view, with Edwardsville and I cast that in a context which made it very difficult for the Board not to understand what my feelings were. And I think that, in the end, they just decided he had to go. So.

EN: This is jumping ahead and this is kind of after your time, but it seems like, Nancy Belck, although the Board composition might have changed but she didn't have that political skill with the Board that you did in her time. Because [Ted] Sanders, you know, also got rid of maybe the best President Carbondale ever had a chance of having. Then our, getting rid of Nancy Belck, I was.

EL: Yeah, and I'm.

EN: I'm so surprised the Board didn't defend her, and didn't support her, and didn't support Joanne Argersinger either. I just don't understand that.

EL: Yeah. See.

EN: But this is after your time.

EL: Yeah. And I don't, ah.

EN: The records aren't enough right now to make any speculation about that.

EL: Ah.

EN: Most of the hard information I have about him [Ted Sanders] is on Oracle, you know, from...

EL: Oh, okay.

EN: ...Dan Corbett and John Reiner [EN and EL both laugh]. David Werner, poor guy.

EL: Yeah. Yeah. Yeah. Well, it was an interesting thing because, when I left, the Board as you know, changed the titles.

EN: Yes.

EL: And they waited until I left to do that.

EN: Mhm. They did that in '96. Yeah.

EL: Yes.

EN: Mm-Hmm.

EL: Ah, I had a very good working relationship with the Board. Ah, the only ah, serious ah, disagreement that we had had to do, I think, with the housing.

EN: Again, I don't write anything about this, but some people have speculated in their interviews that your first Provost caused problems with the Board, but, but maybe that was just their wish rather than a reality [EN laughs].

EL: I think that's right. Yeah. I mean, part of it had I think it was more of an interaction with the faculty. The Board, I don't think.

EN: Wanted to get involved.

EL: No, they, they, they didn't. Ah, but, ah. But the housing, ah, there was a concern on the part of some Board members that, if Edwardsville got housing, that would ah, then cause problems in regard to Carbondale. They were right. I mean, in many ways, Edwardsville is much, much more attractive. I just felt that it had to be. It made no sense if the BHE assented, and they did, then I thought it was important that our Board support it, and they did. I mean. But that was a more difficult thing to achieve with our Board than, I think, anything else that I dealt with.

EN: Interesting. I don't think that was perceived by anyone else that I've interviewed.

EL: Is that right.

EN: Maybe it was perceived by John Reiner but he had other fish to fry in those interviews.

EL: Yeah, yeah. I'm sure, I'm sure. Ah, lemme just. Oh, "The controversy...."

EN: Oh. I wondered about the IEA-Staff Union.

EL: Yeah, I don't remember that.

EN: Well, what it was is that, their, this Legislature had voted a raise....

EL: Okay.

EN: ...um, before the union election. Then, after they voted [to unionize], they were denied the raise and told they had to bargain for their salary. And then, they had to appeal, and of course, they won their appeal because of the chronological sequence there.

EL: Right.

EN: And I just wondered, um, I didn't... you know.

EL: That's alright.

EN: And John Drueke certainly didn't make you a bete noir in that particular case.

EL: No. And I don't think that. This, I'm sure that this goes back to a Board directing that this had to be done.

EN: Probably.

EL And I'm sure that, ah.

EN: They had really stonewalled for a long time before that law made of 1984.

EL: Yes. Well, Let's see. Selection of Deans, well, my view was that I had the responsibility to, in effect, administer the university. Ah, I I never questioned the faculty's primacy with regard to setting the academic program and all adjunct matters connected with academic programs. But, ah, the Deans, while they had to be Janus-headed, mainly they had to pay attention to the faculty and to the Administration, as far as their selection was concerned, it seemed to me that If I were to do my job, I had to have Deans, who they didn't have to kowtow or be loyal. But I wanted people that I felt, that I could reasonably get along with. And that was, you know, I remember ah, the thing came to a head over this selection, maybe it wasn't even a selection. But just a process being set up in the School of Education.

EN: Yes. That was the beginning. That was the first one.

EL: Yeah. And even after. And I wrote, and I think, an extensive memorandum to the community about that. I, but I also remember, that, that there were issues that I was willing, you know, to compromise on, for example, I think, with regard to the School of Social Sciences, ah, we agreed on a removal apparatus. Does that ring a bell?

EN: Um, well, it may be in there, but I didn't really pick that up.

EL: I think there is. I think that the school ah, I remember that, now who raised the question?

EN: John Farley, probably.

EL: Maybe so.

EN: Yes, I I have notes saying that say that John Farley raised the issue of the the new policy really didn't do anything about a Dean who was unpopular.

EL: And I agreed with the language that the school suggested. Um.

EN: Um, it does seem to me that. I, I. This isn't how I put it in the chapter at all, but it does seem to me that some of these Deans that we had were so good, like Carol Keene and Suzanne Jacobitti. You could hardly find more wonderful people.

EL: Yeah, no. Right. Right.

EN: And then, the ones that replaced them, while they were okay, they were. . . .

EL: Well, That's undoubtedly true. I mean, but they had come to what, the ends of their terms.

EN: Well, they could have gone on.

EL: On.

EN: Yeah, right. Without the new process they could have gone on.

EL: Yeah, right.

EN: But then Suzanne refused to go on.

EL: Yes. Right.

EN: And Carol just went on to other you know, political things. She's a politician.

EL: Right [EL laughs] Okay.

EN: You've already told me something about the IBHE.

EL: Yes, a little bit. Okay, well.

EN: But I'm still not really clear about that.

EL: Sure, let me make some comments and see if they're helpful at all. My understanding historically was, and I saw some of this myself, was that John's way of dealing with the IBHE was to sort of set them up as the enemy. Ah, and that, you know, that went across very well at home, but ah, the Board didn't like it, and the IBHE, of course, didn't like it at all. Buzz came in and he ah, had a very good working relationship with the IBHE, and when I came in, my view was ah, you know, I'm not interested in conflict, we were staring ah, you know, down the muzzle of the gun. I mean, ah, I can remember the first legislative session that I attended, which dealt with the budgets for higher education.

EN: Mm-hmm.

EL: They had a big tableau up in front of the Budget Committee, which showed here are all these schools, you know, with average costs per student, and they're down at the bottom. There's one spike! SIUE. we were something like 30% above the average, ah, and of course, this was at the

time when we had a lot of you know, talk about well we need to get rid of a couple of universities. And, it was not a very good prospect. But in any event, I I thought that it would be much better to to try and work with them and to manage the process of budget-reduction internally, rather than having it shoved down our throat, although they they clearly had the power to make recommendations to the Legislature any way that they wanted. But ah, the key person I worked with was Dick Wagner. Ah, he ah, was a very, very good Executive Director. He, his heart was in the right place, in my perspective, about what universities ought to be doing in terms of paying more attention to undergraduates, ah, you know, trying to cut operating costs and and get some of that burden off of students etcetera. So, ah, we enjoyed a splendid relationship for the bulk of ah, the time that I was President. Ah, I, he was a friend of the university.

EN: This is related to the budget issue. As with the Deans, you had to, you had to get control of the budget. And I, I interviewed Luther Statler. And he never said exactly what the issue was, but I gathered was the old-loose-fiefdom kinda person. And you were the person who wanted to manage every penny.

EL: No.

EN: No, that wasn't it?

EL: Well.

EN: Well, I didn't write about it because I couldn't quite.

EL: No. Well, I mean let me see if I can get my thoughts in order.

EN: He said you that and he, "had words."

EL: But that was much later.

EN: Oh, okay. Okay.

EL: Well, I'll tell you.

EN: And I thought maybe it was over budgetary questions?

EL: No. No. What happened was that ah, Luther, I appointed Luther as Director of ah...

EN: Physical Plant.

EL: Yes, exactly. And ah, in the course of that, you know, every year, I met with the heads of various departments, we talked about budgets. And so, I talked to Luther about his budget etcetera, and he didn't like what he heard, so he resigned.

EN: Oh. I see.

EL: Okay. Well, when I say he resigned, he sent me a letter. And I called him in and said, “Are you serious about this? If you are, then I’ll accept it. Ah, if you’re not, tell me now.” Well he said, “I’m not serious.”

EN: Oh. Okay.

EL: Okay. A year later, he pulled the same thing.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: And ah, this time, I did not call him in. I simply wrote him a letter and said, “I appreciate your dedicated service, and I accept your resignation.” Because I just didn't want to.

EN: Right.

EL: I don't like to play around like that.

EN: Okay.

EL: But ah, the larger ah, budget issue went something like this. Ah the BHE determined and I can't remember these figures, so please be gentle.

EN: Yes.

EL: Ah. That initially, we were \$15 million dollars over-funded. Ah, and they gave us a workout period. And I decided that ah, this, you know, had enormous implications for the future of the institution and I didn't want to ah, simply make determinations in a vacuum, and that led to the creation of the University Planning and Budget Council. Ah, and I, I think during the first six months or so of our meetings and discussions, I made it very clear that, ah, if it was the will of the faculty that they did not want forced reductions in numbers, then it would have to be handled by not ah when a position became vacant. Not filling them. Making cuts in support costs ah, making cuts in administrative costs as much as we could do. In effect look you know, look in every nook and cranny, well, that's what we did. In effect, we didn't fire anybody, now, you know, I, whether that was the best thing to do or not, it was the path we took. Ah, I thought ah, everybody had a an opportunity to register their perspectives through their representatives, I mean, not only the faculty but also the professional staff, civil service etcetera. And ah, I think a minimal amount of damage was done to the institution. And, I think, in fact, it came out really much stronger than what it had gone in.

EN: Was the, was the UPBC a unique institution? Or was it something. Did you read about it in The Chronicle?

EL: No. I just.

EN: ...or in some book about education? [EL laughs]

EL: I stayed, I stayed away from professional ah, education books as much as possible. I mean, I'm not an educator. I mean I'm not an administrator I should say.

EN: Right.

EN: And ah, I did. I attended meetings where you know, I talked to other people and stuff like that, but that, I mean there's not very much creativeness about the University Planning and Budget Council. It's a pretty obvious thing. If you're going to consult, you've got to have a mechanism, and that was the mechanism. And ah.

EN: Mhm. Okay. So, it was unique. It wasn't anywhere else in Illinois. At any other school.

EL: Not that I'm aware of at that time?

EN: Right.

EL: And and, there may have been, but I just don't, I don't know.

EN: Well, ah, John Reiner says the same thing about these, this his inventories of people's work effort. That that wasn't really going on either. I mean, he's very modest about it, but.

EL: Yeah.

EN: But, he was doing a really heroic job I think.

EL: Yes.

EN: You know, in the same effort.

EL: Yes, exactly.

EN: You know to look in all the nooks and crannies.

EL: Ah, let's see. Anything else that you want me to comment on. About the BHE. Oh, the Dental School. That was a very interesting.

EN: Yes. I wondered about the Dental School. Because there's nothing in the files tell that really tells how you did it.

EL: Okay [EL and EN both laugh] I'll tell you. Ah, well, it was a bolt from the blue, first of all. Because, what happened was that ah, the University of Illinois and Northwestern apparently made representations to the BHE that there were too many dentists being produced in the state, ah, and, you know, that we didn't need all these dental schools, ah, what they omitted to mention in their representations to mention was that the rural areas were not particularly well-served nor were the rust-belt cities along the Mississippi. Ah, so, I got the word, ah, "We're going to shut down the Dental School." And ah, I went to the BHE and said, you know, "We need to make our case. You've got to hear us out on this," and of course, there was no problem, I mean they did things reasonably. So what they did was they assembled a committee of members of their Board,

together with staff people, and said that ah, “Let us know when we can come and visit.” Etcetera. So, I called a war council. Ah, and I wish I had it, but I don’t. I wrote on a sheet of paper some steps that we could take. Ah, we could...First of all, who were our natural allies in this case? Well, clearly, Alton.

EN: Yes.

EL: ...and secondly, East St. Louis. You see, I had maintained that dental clinic in East St. Louis, even though the Dental School didn’t want it, and the reason I maintained it was because it gave us a foothold there. So, I started out by talking with local legislators. I remember Sam Wolf, [Sam] Vadalabene, Kenny Hall—Kenny was very important. He’s a Senator whose territory encompassed East St. Louis.—and Wyvetter Younge. I asked them to do everything that they could to rouse public opinion. And that’s exactly what happened, we scheduled a meeting for the BHE committee in Alton. The auditorium was packed [EN laughs]. The committee couldn’t believe its eyes and ears. With ah, these people. One after another, people testified on how important it was. And if that didn’t open their eyes, when we got to East St. Louis, we also had singing and dancing [EN and EL both laugh]. I mean, the whole point was that, you know, there was a great outpouring of public support, well, the committee went home, and at the next BHE meeting, they recommended that the Dental School be maintained. Now before that vote was taken, I had reached an agreement with ah, Dick Wagner, the Executive Director, that if it was affirmative, then the BHE would support constructing a new Dental School building in Alton, and they followed through. That was a very, very satisfying. It was a fight. It got your blood up. And to see the people respond in the way that they did, it was, I mean it was a terrific feeling. Ah, they needed us. And ah, it was great!

EN: John, John Reiner also mentioned that the School of Dental Medicine had plans for a large enterprise here on the campus and, and that you put that on the block as a trade for the new Dental clinic.

EL: Well I don't, I was never going to go for that. They wanted a \$25 million dollar building.

EN: Yes. Right.

EL: And ah, that was just not in the cards.

EN: In the cards. Okay.

EL: Yeah. Right. No.

EN: Well, that's nice to know that story. That's wonderful.

EL: And, um, the Experiment in Higher Education. That got started long before my time.

EN: Yes, that started in '66. I know.

EL: You're right. And ah, so I, I really can't comment on it. Ah, by the time. Oh, well, lemme tell you...with regard to East St. Louis, when ah, Kochman appointed me the acting Provost in the spring of '76.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: I decided that I ah, it would, I knew that I needed to get out and visit these other two campuses. And see what was going on. And so I set aside, I think it was either the month of June or July, and I spent the entire month at East St. Louis. Ah, interviewing the member so the staff, talking to students, etcetera. Trying to figure out ah, how best you know, to move forward. Ah, because I think at that time, EHE may have been ah, off the books. And I just don't recall.

EN: Oh, not in '76. I think that happened in '78.

EL: '78. Okay. That may be.

EN: After Shaw took over.

EL: Okay. Alright. But ah, That may be right, but ah, I remember, remember that and you know, hearing what people were saying about ah.

EN: It had changed. It's curriculum had changed.

EL: It had.

EN: And they had tried to align everything with General Education courses on the main campus.

EL: That's it. And, and, I mean, nothing was working. It just wasn't working. And it was clear that something more dramatic would have to be done. But I, and I thought that the ah, spending the month there was extremely useful in that regard. Ah, now. Lemme see, "It seems that you had to carry out a policy of the Shaw years..." Well, I'm sure that whatever the policy was. Which I don't remember right now. I mean I'm sure I must have recommended it to Buzz [Shaw].

EN: Yes.

EL: So [EL laughing]. So.

EN: The buck stops there. Okay.

EL: Right, exactly. Yeah, so ah.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: Well then, so, I'll just ask you about this. Again I just, I think that it, that this was an issue with faculty. And it was an issue of the...regardless of the individuals, you know, I've interviewed Janet McReynolds, and people about this. And this isn't her point of view that I'm

representing. But a lot of faculty felt that, that there were tenured individuals in the Experiment in Higher Education, who had been tenured under the old policy, where you tenure in the university. And during the controversy, and, and this is during um, the the Board, when they decided to eliminate it [the EHE]. It changed the definition of tenure, to tenure in the department [rather than the university]. That was used as the standard to then to ah, fire, to...

EL: Oh boy.

EN: ... you know, deny those people [EHE faculty] tenure.

EL: Yeah. Right.

EN: And some stayed on, and some went on, to other places. But that was a very um, for many faculty people that seemed like a terrible thing to do. And I, I say this regardless of the individuals, just that they had been tenured and then, they were denied. They didn't have tenure anymore, um, and they were. And ah, the new pol, the policy was, the new definition was after they had been granted tenure. So, I don't, I don't know if that's really ever been sorted out in a scholarly way. There's a little literature on the [EHE], but none of it really delves into this issue. And I.

EL: I, I, I'm don't know how to respond.

EN: And so many of the black faculty were lost because of that. Because I mean, so many, you know, we were, we had a lot of black faculty on the books anyway in people's minds I think.

EL: Well help me out here. Ah.

EN: Or in the East St. Louis peoples minds.

EL: They were tenured in the, in the Experiment in Higher Education.

EN: Yes, they were ten...they were tenured "in the University" thought. In the University. That's how the old tenure policy was, before, I think 1977, the Board announced now tenure now was in a unit. When the unit was eliminated, tenure was eliminated. But, they had been tenured under the old system.

EL: Okay.

EN: Um. It seems like this was one of those things "You had to do." Like, like when you had to do the CAS. You just had to do it. And you just had to write and say well some things, you know. When I think about it, this is probably one of those things too. But. Um.

EL: Well, I wish that I could recall better.

EN: Yeah.

EL: I remember as I said, the time that I spent in East St. Louis. I don't remember a direct line between that and whatever the recommendation I made was to Shaw. And I'm sure that. I do remember. Ah.

EN: You gave them lot's of options.

EL: Options! Yeah.

EN: But, but not within the context of tenure.

EL: I think you're right. I'm sure that, I'm sure that being tenured back in the university was not one of them.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: Yeah.

EN: But, oh well. The other thing wondered about East St. Louis is that ah, it seemed to me that there were a lot of personality conflicts there within, within the community of black administrators. And I wondered, or I noticed in interviewing I wasn't able to interview Professor [Emil] Jason because he was dead.

EL: He died.

EN: I did, I did interview Art Greist. And, and um it just seems I read a lot of public, published interviews of, of Emil Jason. And it seems like he really had a lot of good ideas that have since come to pass. Like Criminal Justice. About the program for...but he wanted it to be in East St. Louis. And he got of good ideas.

EL: He did.

EN: And a lot of money in there.

EL: He did.

EN: He was very successful, but I just wondered what, what was the problem with working more with him, or was that?

EL: Well, Emil and I had worked together for a number of years.

EN: Mhm.

EL: Um, but I think, to put it in stark terms, ah, it was Emil's way or...

EN: Or no.

EL: ...or no way. And, ah, we we used to meet on a regular basis, and talk. We must have talked about these things thousands of times.

EN: Yes.

EL: To no. And there was never a resolution of this. Um, I think, frankly, that ah, Emil felt that he never got the recognition from the university that he should have. And how he saw that I'm not sure.

EN: Okay.

EL: Um. Well.

EN: Okay. It just seemed like he had a lot of um.

EL: He had good ideas.

EN: Good ideas. And he didn't just talk about them. He usually worked them out. He wrote a lot of kind of detailed discussion of those ideas. And then, when they, when they closed the Experiment in Higher Education when there were no baccalaureate programs being offered down there, he got very angry.

EL: Yes. He was very angry.

EN: Um. Yeah, so. Oh well. That's, you know, again that's not that's a problem of sources and just. There's no way to really speculate about that.

EL: I mean, he, he was a very passionate man about certain things. Ah, and I respected him for that. But I also knew that ah, there were legitimate ways of doing things within the institution, and other ways. And, as long as I was the President, I felt that we had to do things legitimately.

EN: Okay.

EL: Ah, Nederlander [Nederlander Organization, was a private firm which had been contracted by SIUE to run the Mississippi River Festival in 1978].

EN: Yeah, I haven't written a word on the MRF [Mississippi River Festival]. I wrote fifty pages on John Rendleman without mentioning it. I don't think it was very important to him. As it's been argued by.

EL: Yeah, and it may not have been. I think that it ah.

EN: He had just left it up to [John] Metcalf. He had just told him to find the money, and.

EL: And that, that, you know. Again.

EN: That was probably hard on Metcalf.

EL: Well, this is this is off the record.

EN: Yes, we can turn it off [recording stops]

EN: it looked like a mess.

EL: Let's see.

EN: Ah.

EL: Well in terms of number ten. Um, I don't know that I can pick out any one thing ah, as being the most challenging. I I think that, trying again to move the university in terms of that initial sense I had, of uh, building the strongest undergraduate program that we could, strong selective masters degrees and then providing services to the community that were in line with ah, the strengths of our faculty. That was the job, and ah, I hoped that we've moved forward.

EN: Yes. I think several people that I've interviewed like Doug Eder and John Meisel really felt like you settled the question of, "What was the direction of the university." They were really positive about that.

EL: Yeah. Well, there had been so much confusion. And, I mean, it's just the way things happen. You know they. They hired a lot of faculty in the beginning, ah, young Ph.Ds. for the most part, ah, who had the only experience they had was with where they went to graduate school, and they thought they would replicate it. Ah, and nobody paid much attention to why you know, the university came into existence in the first place, so consequently, ah, when things got a little tough, and they, and things weren't in line with those initial expectations, I I, we had a problem. And getting that cleared up was, ah, fell to me.

EN: Yes. [EN and EL both laugh]

EL: Um.

EN: And then, I asked about Sam Vadalabene or...

EL: Yes. Well, Sam, of course, was a tremendous ah, support for the institution. He sort of sucked all the air out of you know, the space he was in. In other words, it made it difficult for other politicians. Ah, but, we had, at least during the time that I was in ah, in office, he was there. Ah, Kenny [Kenneth] Hall.

EN: Yes.

EL: Who again, I can't say enough about.

EN: Bob Booker tells me a lot of stuff about Kenny Hall.

EL: Did he?

EN: [EN laughing] Yes.

EL: Yeah. He's a great guy. Um, Governor Thompson. Straight-shooter, for me, I mean. And the same with regard for [Governor Jim] Edgar. I had good relations with our Federal legislators. And of course, I got to know them fairly well. Jerry Costello, early on, ah, had asked me to. He had you know, that East-West Gateway rotates the chairmanship back and forth across the River? so he was the Chairmen when this occurred. Ah, he came to me and asked me to chair a ah, regional committee to look into the bridge problems. So, back in the '80s, based on that work, East-West Gateway issued a, ah, booklet about the problems with the bridges etcetera, which was sorta, ah, how would you say that? The ah, the first step in moving toward or doing something. And then, ah, after that, I got together with the former Mayor of St. Louis, John Poelker, and Bob Highland. And a couple of other people, and we purchased the ah, at that time, I guess it was called the Veterans' Bridge, ah.

EN: Jefferson Barrack's Bridge?

EL: No. No it's it's what we today call the Martin Luther King Bridge. Ah, that had, ah East St. Louis owned it. We purchased it. We defeased the bonds on it. And turned the bridge over to the two States.

EN: Oh. Okay.

EL: And that's how Illinois came to refurbish it.

EN: Okay.

EL: So that was a very ah.

EN: Goodness.

EL: Yeah.

EN: That would make. There must be a lot of information on that somewhere.

EL: There probably is.

EN: Uh-huh.

EL: Yeah. Um. I did a lot of stuff like that [EN laughs]. That was in line with you know. Again getting.

EN: Well now, how did the East? Where did the East-West Gateway get the capital to buy a bridge? I mean it must have been.

EL: Well, they didn't, they didn't. Ah, we ah, we hired a lawyer.

EN: Consortium of banks or?

EL: Well no, now we hired a lawyer. We got the money pledged from the State.

EN: Okay.

EL: And the lawyer his job was to ah, get rid of all the entailments. Ah and he did. He did a superb job. And.

EN: Okay.

EL: Um.

EN: I think. Well you, you made your own list of subjects here and.

EL: Um, well yeah, actually we talked about housing. I told you the business about academics and athletics.

EN: Yeah.

EL: Ah, in, on the outreach side, I haven't really talked about Southwestern Illinois Development or my work with the RCGA [Regional Commerce and Growth Association], but you probably have got stuff on that.

EN: That's, There's a lot about it in the "Lazerson Years".

EL: Yeah, okay.

EN: Okay.

EL: Um, I've mentioned Arts and Issues. I really am very proud of ah, how I kept down tuition and fees.

EN: Okay.

EL: That was ah, and kept up salaries, of course, there was a lot of building that went on, but I'm not going to go through that stuff. I also. I don't know if you are aware of this or not, but I created ah, something. I don't know what it was called even. But it was a luncheon group, ah, I think we got together once a month, or on a periodic basis. Ah, and they were faculty members. Ah you mention Carol Keene was there. [Suzanne] Jacobitti. Ah, let's see ah, Sid Deny.

EN: Carol Keene mentioned it in an interview.

EL: Oh, okay.

EN: She did mention it.

EL: Yeah, and that was sort of interesting, we, we talked about you know, whatever came up.

EN: Yep. And no records were kept of those conversations.

EL: Oh, no. No. No. No. No. They were always giving me lessons on the philosophical bases of power. [EN laughs] And I would, you know [EL laughs].

EN: Well, I could ask you about the, speaking of that, I could ask you about the Management Audit Team. I interviewed Dennis Hostetler.

EL: Yes. They were ah, did very, very good things. I mean I really enjoyed the work that those folks did. I think.

EN: Bud [Maurice] Hirsch. Another great guy.

EL: Yeah. Yeah. They were good people.

EN: Yeah. I haven't interviewed him. But I always thought that he was one of the greatest guys around. I interviewed Marsha Puro.

EL: Yeah. Marsha, right. She was on this other thing also that I mentioned [Management Audit Team].

EN: Yeah. Uh-huh. Well, anything else.

EL: God, I tell you, you know half these things I wouldn't have remembered if you hadn't jogged my [EN laughs]. Really! I mean, its helpful. Ah.

EN: Well, thank you very much for such a rich conversation.

EL: You're more than welcome.