

Dr. Earline Patterson, Director of SIUE Special Services
Transcript of interview for the History of SIUE Oral History Project
Interviewed by Ellen Nore
July 12th, 2006

Ellen Nore [EN]: It's July 12th, 2006. I'm interviewing Dr. Earline Patterson for the History of SIUE. This is Ellen Nore-Nordhouser. [Recording stops and starts again] I, I usually start. Let's see if it's working. Yes, I usually start by asking, um, how you happen to come to SIU?

Earline Patterson [EP]: Um, I, I came to SIU in 1990. Um, where um, I had been working for the University of Houston. I, and uh, ah in Clear Lake City, Texas. And I was relocating again. I had moved to Houston, um, and ah, was coming back to the Illinois area. And ah, I decided that ah, where I had worked, which was the Lewis and Clark Community College, um, was, um a great place to be. But I was ready to continue the work I had at the University of Houston and decided to come over to Southern Illinois University Edwardsville. And decided to live ah in the Edwardsville community. And there was an opportunity for um, me to come in for ah, an Academic Advising ah, position. And um, I took that opportunity.

EN: Now at ah, the University Houston Clear Lake, did you do the same kind...Did you administer a big grant?

EP: I was Coordinator of Women's Resource Services, and I worked with underrepresented groups, similar to what I do here at SIU Edwardsville, except these were women primarily. And there was a particular emphasis, ah, placed on women at the University of Houston Clear Lake, and there was a very different campus. It was a campus that was a senior college. In that, they had no freshmen or sophomore level students. All the students were juniors, seniors, and graduate students. And they were trying to enhance the lives of their female, um, students, ah, and, and graduating them and getting them to go onto graduate school. And so I had that um, pleasure of working with that group. And it was out of the Counseling Center, um, um slash Academic Advising Center. So, we were sort of a one-stop-shop, the way it was set up there.

EN: Well you, after you got...well, did you come first to Lewis and Clark from there...?

EP: I worked at Lewis and Clark College before I moved.

EN: Oh, before you moved to Clear Lake.

EP: Yes. Yes.

EN: Okay, and at Lewis and Clark, were you in advising?

EP: Academic Advising.

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: And I was at ah, Lewis and Clark College for, um, a few years. This is after I had finished my um graduate work at Illinois State. And um, was there for a few years and then I was, um, going to Houston because at the time, my husband's employment was with an oil company, Amoco Oil Company. And they were doing a lot of, um, migration to the refineries in Houston in, in, in that period of time. And so, we left and went to Houston. And were there for about ten years.

EN: So how, um, then you came here, back, you came back from Clear Lake up here and got a job in Academic Counselling and Advising. And then, how did your job change?

EP: Well, there was an opening for Director of Special Services um, that um, um, had come open. And I was approached about ah, my interest in that position. And at the time, ah, it was Richard Dremuk that was here, ah, and, and Terrel Martin, and ah, they, they talked with me about coming into this position. And ah, I decided to consider it. And ah, I did.

EN: And that was what year?

EP: That was '94.

EN: 1994.

EP: Uh-huh.

EN: And was that the first year, of the, of the grant for Special Service?

EP: The grant had been here for [EP sighs] 30 years.

EN: Okay, jeez.

EP: Mhm-mhm.

EN: I guess that's going on with clout [EP laughs quietly] and its, was a federal grant.... uh-huh.

EP: Mhm-mhm, mhm-mhm.

EN: Hymn. So how did you, after you got, took over the position...they had been running it...Richard Dremuk and Terrell Martin?

EP: No, they were, um, ah, administrators who had been in the position as Director. It was a woman named, um, Azzie [phonetic] Bishop was her name. And she had been the Director, um, prior to my coming in. And ah, let's see Margene Jerrols, was...had been Acting Director prior to my coming in. And ah, then they brought me in um, as a permanent.

EN: And so how did you, how did you change things when you got in, or did you find...?

EP: Pretty dramatically! [EN laughs]. I think that's one of the reasons that people for the 30 years that the grant had been um, ah, on the campus, ah, it was a little known secret. Um, which I didn't quite have an understanding about it myself. Ah, as an Academic Advisor, I knew there was this office over there that worked with some students. I didn't have a real clear picture of what kinds of students they were, um, what kind of work did they do with those students. And I think that was probably where ah most people were with, with ah, the office. They actually, for a long time, didn't even have much of an office. They were sort of around, um, this was before, um, I, I came to ah, to work over here. They were sort of around the corner where Dr. Martin's old office was. And they just kinda had cubicles. And they didn't have very much in the way of ah, office space, and, and resources. And um, we were um, especially fortunate, I think, when we began to become more integrated with the university as, um, as a whole. When, when I took the position as Director, I started then to connect with offices who had an interest in, um, advocating for students. Um, started talking with Financial Aid Director, um, started ah, talking with, um, had already the connection with Academic Advising. Um, and then began to serve in other components of various committees throughout the university, which allowed there to be more exposure about what we were doing over here in this program. And basically, what we were doing was offering, ah, academic support, ah, by way of, ah, tutoring, ah, by way of mentoring,

um, by providing our own academic advising to those students. Um, study skills, um, teaching the importance of time management. Um, all of these things that were going to be the survival um, factor in students who were first-generation college. And in doing so began to pull in various facets of the university community in such a way that we were no longer a separate entity, but that we were working in um, relationship, all of us on the same rapport and that we were no longer a secret um, small area that, you know people kind of wondered, "What actually do they do there?"

EN: That's right.

EP: So, we began to show up on the radar.

EN: That's true.

EP: Ah, but it had been 30 years that the program had existed.

EN: That's interesting because I looked through all the presidential archives and, and, and before the 90s, it did, it was invisible.

EP: That's true. That's true.

EN: And it was such a, it was such a large amount of money and uh, so much potential, I'm really surprised.

EP: Mhm-mhm, I was, I was reluctant to assume the responsibilities because of that very factor. I just why, why, what is the situation here? What's going on? And, and ah, we also knew that it was a grant-supported funding source, and so I, of course, had my um, reservations about moving from um, hard money to soft money. And so I never did that. I always worked for, um, the university. And that, those were the terms that I was willing to accept.

EN: Good.

EP: At ah, because as it were, you know it became um, um, it's cost-effective anymore to reduce with our administration, ah, political administration and, in D.C. to look at ways we can curb costs and when you have to now, with our being in a war, and, and so many of the, ah, funding, um, options exist no longer. Um, we're here now on university funding. And um, this is not, I mean, I don't know how many um, grant programs across the country. But there are many, many grants that are cut every year. Because especially if you've existed for as long as we have. They have the expectation that eventually, your institution *will* take the, take the commitment and make it their own. And we were of the older ones, we were one of the older grants. And um, I think that's their intent. Because there is a lot of money that is coming down from the government, and when you take that over a number of 30 years they say, "Well, okay, we've graduated students in this program. That, you know, they've done well, which is why they've existed for so long, the institution can now see, um, the contribution that, that program makes, and it's time now for us to offer *new* funding to schools and universities that are applying for the same revenue." And, ah, we're fortunate ah, that the institution sees the contribution that we make and ah, have made it possible for us to continue doing the work that we do. I think that's because this has become the kind of university that believes in the constituents who come here. And believe that if they have support in place that they can, ah, be retained um, to graduation. And that's what we're a part of. And that's what I'm excited to be a part of.

EN: Um, so your program - your program doesn't involve any particular courses. you take students, your students are taking regular courses...[Crosstalking]

EP: Regardless of their...

EN: They're not taking academic development...

EP: Absolutely, which is a, which is a [miss]conception um, that ah, because there's a confused um, ah well the terminology is confusing first of all. You've got instructional services.

EN: Yes.

EP: And then you have Special Services.

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: And then you have Disability Services. You have all of that, that ah, you know, tends to get con-con-confusing. So I think the good news is we had a name change. Which is you know, Student Opportunities, and that's gonna help some of that Special Services, you know Instructional Services ah, ah delineation. And, and, and Academic Development courses aren't just um...the students that are in our program are, are not necessarily in AD classes. We have students who are. And then we have students who are at the higher end of the ACT range; however, because of their status, be it, um, income, be it first generational status, be it ah, um whatever the um, transition difficulties that they encounter as they move from their environment in their community, at their high school, to this in, in many cases foreign land. Where there's a foreign language ah, being spoken and a different culture to adapt, um, oftentimes these students find themselves at risk in retention, in staying here long enough to figure it out. They have the capacity to do it; they have the ability to do it. But they might leave before they give, um, themselves a chance to excel. The frustration can be so...so we tend to create a supportive community...

EN: Okay.

EP:...where within ah, within that freshmen year especially. Ah, and then that sophomore year, that there is a link that they have to the resources here um, where, you know the institution can be so large to someone who is making this transition. That somebody knows their name. Somebody has um, contact with them on a regular basis. They're connected with upperclassmen who have been in the same situation that they have, who know what they're going through. And so, there's that supportive community that we create as well.

EN: So how many, has the numbers - have the numbers of students changed over the years?

EP: Yeah, I think so. We have, um, from the Department of Education's funding with a grant we only could support 390 students. That was the mandate. And because they were funding us, um, we had to comply with what they said.

EN: Is this 390 new ones every year, or 390 total, then how many new ones each year...?

EP: We...it depends on how many were declared out and graduate.

EN: Oh okay. Okay.

EP: So, we would have a waitlist, and we would move them in as...but our constant number is about 390, and yeah. And ah, you know, what we know from looking at the statistics that ah, um, were conducted at the request of David Werner. Um, is that the students who are in these supportive structures graduate with a higher graduation ratio than those who are not. So, for those however small number it might be, for those students, a real difference is being made. Um,

now we probably will be working with 175 to 200 students now that the ah, um funding is a little less. Quite a bit less. But never-the...you know, not to the fact that ah, we...if we have the space and we have the resources were gonna accommodate. We don't say "you're number 176, and because of that you're on your own." If we've got the time and the opportunity and space were going to try and do what we can. Because looking at the space, just realizing what a premium space is on, on this university campus - looking at this space, we've got a really good locale.

EN: Yes.

EP: In a classroom building! And ah, there's a new building that um, is being spearheaded by Dr. Manuel [phonetic], the Academic Success Center, and so, you know we would, we will be a part of that. So I think that that also speaks to the university's commitment to its constituents in the university.

EN: Do you, do you already know about your space in the new building. I've seen ah, Richard Walker has given me a pamphlet about it.

EP: Yeah, that's pretty much what I've, I've ah, I've seen. And ah, I like the concept. That there be all these student resources in one place. And ah, it's gonna be a faculty, no more classroom space. And ah, nobody needed that.

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: Um, that these offices won't be used for these purposes. But the one-stop-shop concept, I think it's a great one. Um, and students need to see other students using resources. You've got a lot of opportunity on this campus to receive help, but students have to be open about using them. You can't benefit from just because they're here. You've gotta use them. And students need to see that other students are doing that.

EN: Mhm. Okay. [pause] You know, I know some, some faculty have thought that it would be too bad to move the, your office, and the Academic Development office out because it's handy to have them right in the classroom buildings.

EP: It is. It is handy. I know. I know. I don't know how that's gonna play out.

EN: Yeah.

EP: But ah, we've grown accustomed to being able to, you know, go out into the lobby area and find a student that ah we needed to find.

EN: Yes, that's right. And just ah, it makes...but whatever. Yes, the new situation will probably evolve its own positive spin.

EP: That's what I'm hoping for. I've, and that's exactly what I'm hoping.

EN: Well, what about, I um, I guess the atmosphere now, I, for, I think for, looking over our university now...I may be wrong about this, but I, it seems like we have over, over time, we've been, been sporadically very committed to academic support services. And, and, and um, do you think we've been exceptional in that, or that we've reflected national trends?

EP: Hmn, I, I feel strongly that because of, that, that grant, and what it meant. And um, the university had to shore up ah, and give space, the university had to give a certain amount. I think that there has been a commitment. Looking at geographically where were physically situated um, I think there has been a commitment to um, the - what I like to call the constituents. These are the people who are in the area um, the design of the institution is with them in mind. Um, the

whole social services unit, um, is about making sure the under-skilled students have a reservoir of, of ah, of, of materials, and, and, and you know, teachers, and um, I think that that says we have a genuine concern. Um, you know, some people think, and I don't know, some people think that the community college is where those students need to start first. And, um, you know I don't know. I like the idea; for example, there was a student from Chicago, I just was on the phone talking with him a few minutes ago. Who didn't look like he was a student who was gonna make it. He came in here last fall. And ah, he had a lot of baggage with him. Um, he ah, never liked school, and he got here, and he bonded with a really intellectual kinda guy. Um, he found that ah, he liked this kid. He was just really, really bright. Now the kid from Chicago was bright, but he had to work really hard for his grades. The other kid whose from Springfield, he was maybe [phone ringing in background] a, kinda nerdy, maybe didn't have to work as hard for his grades. But they found something that they liked about each other. And I think that they brought something, some enrichment to the lives of each other. The kid from Springfield is going home ah, over break, and getting beat up. Ah, because he was changing, he was a little different. You know education changes you.

EN: Yes.

EP: And ah, he was having some problems when he was going back to his old neighborhood. And um, the kid from Chicago told him a few things about street stamina. And you know about having, and how to ah [EN and EP laugh], it was interesting...

EN: That's right.

EP: And, and, and the kid from Springfield, taught the one from Chicago a lot about being concerned about politics, and being informed about politics, and they ended up doing a project together for ah, the game course, which is a University 112, ah section for African American males. And um, that's the kind of bonding that we know can come in a university environment that can expand to - to what - we have no idea the limit-limitless options of both of these boys. And ah, I think there's a lot to be said for the Community College, I have, I have ah, nothing but wonderful, wonderful things, having worked at the Community College I know what their mission is. And I know what they're about, and they're fabulous. Um, and yet sometimes the university's mission can serve students that, you'd be surprised, you know. Not everybody is college material. And not everybody should be, ah, graduated high-school and go onto college. Some people need the vocational programs at Ranken or DeVry, um, because they are, they're better suited for that. And thank goodness we have those options for them. You know our mechanic that works on our cars, I'm never gonna make the kind of money he makes [EP laughs].

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: Uh, and you know he doesn't have a four-year degree, but he's doing alright for himself.

EN: That's right.

EP: So, um, you know, I do believe that um, the Community College has a genuine uh, objective, and goal that's needed. And we don't need to compete with them, we just need to be in concert. Um, the two institutions.

EN: That's interesting. Yeah. Um, well, I asked about the significance of Academic Support Services held by the various administrations for which you have worked. You might, may not want to comment on that, you don't have to...

EP: Ah.

EN: I wondered if there was any administration that you felt was particularly um...

EP: Less supportive as opposed to others?

EN: Well maybe one that was particularly supportive.

EP: Um, you know, I, I was here in '90 so...

EN: You came during Dr. Lazerson.

EP: Okay, see I never really had...being at the level that we are. I didn't have much interaction ah, with, with, ah, top administration. That was ah, you know, I would report to Director of Academic Counseling and Advising. And ah, Terrell Martin was here when I got here. And ah, you weren't going into the President's office.

EN: No, I remember, I remem...[EN laughs] Jane. I interviewed with Jane Floyd-Hendey [EP laughing] and she, mentioned that.

EP: You weren't gonna go sit and talk.

EN: Oh yeah. Because, so that, because I, I find that really surprising [EP continues laughing] that a strong woman like yourself, would be having lunch, you know...

EP: Every Tuesday, we had lunch together.

EN: Well, not with Terrell Martin [EP laughing].

EP: And he, and you know and I miss him. In his way, in his way - in his way, he, he was very dutiful in his administration, in his leadership skills. But, but, but in his way, he was a genuine soul, and he didn't play, you know, if, if he was, if he was for something you knew it. If he wasn't, you knew that! You know, you didn't have to guess where he stood. And you could respect that.

EN: Yes.

EP: You may not like it, but you can respect that.

EN: Yes.

EP: And that, I think that was something that, no matter your feelings about him, you would have to say, if you stood for it, if he was for it, you knew it. And if he, if he didn't like it, he would explain to you why. And you weren't going to convince him otherwise, but he wasn't gonna vacillate [EN and EP laugh].

EN: Well, I said as an administrator, and as a black woman: have there been any extra challenges for you within the university that you have helped create?

EP: Challenges that I helped to create?

EN: No, challenges that in the university you helped to create, you helped to make the university...

EP: Oh, well I think that opportunity is just being a role model too. I think, for all students you know, sometimes ah, depending on where our students hale from, they may not have much exposure to, um, African-American women in ah, in administrative positions. And then there are others who, have had limited exposure, and they, they, you know, they don't, they need to be

able to see themselves. They need to be able to see this is somebody who looks like me, and they are doing something that um, I'm proud of, and students will come in and share that kind of thing with me, you know, all the time. As well as I've had students who have been from some some rural areas. And they didn't have African-American teachers, and they didn't have...and so, you know, we were in the the, the relationship with students. We can do some one-on-one more so than sometimes than teachers can because you've got so many in a class, you know and the teachers, ah, you know, you have to go to the faculty person's office and ah, we have a way of seeking the student out and pulling them in. Because they have to come in to even be a student, you've gotta see an Academic Advisor, so we've got that little extra caveat to pull students in. And I have had, in my interactions with students, them say things like, you know, "I would never talk to a black woman up close and personal before." [EP and EN laugh] And it's endearing to me...

EN: Yes.

EP: ...because they're comfortable enough to say, you know, here's, here's somebody I can just open up to, and we can talk about some things. And um, and gender and race may not have much to do with it, and it may ah, at the same time it may. But ah, a relationship is being established with somebody who is different than me, that I've not had a relationship with before. And I really enjoy that. I like that. As well as I like being a role model to those students who, um, see themselves in me. You know, I um, I had women role models at the very first job that I can remember having was a co-op job in high-school. And um, it was a librarian; I was at the Hayner-Pub Library in uh Alton. And ah, a woman offered me my first job, ah, and I just felt, and it, she perhaps had that relationship with everybody. And I just felt that she looked after me and she wanted me to do well, and she was open to ah, to, you know, encouraging me to ask questions. And I didn't, because I didn't, I was in a new environment, you know, I didn't feel like I couldn't make mistakes. I just really felt supported, ah, in that environment and in other um, um, opportunities when I think about the University of Houston, and the women who mentored and supported me there. I was *so far* from home. Um, that um, you know I had real reservations about going that far.

EN: Yes.

EP: At the same time, the environment that was created in the Counselling Center, and with the Women's Resource Center and there were a lot of women who worked there, um, they became extended family. Ah, they, I still go and visit them today. Um, they just um, were just very recep...I mean we had...my first hurricane [EN laughs] I met with, hadn't experienced anything ah, close to that and, and ah, you know, when, when that happened, and they knew that I didn't know anything about that kinda climate. And, and they said, "Okay now. This is one, you know, you can stay this one out you know, this one were gonna be moving up to Dallas. Were gonna move from Houston, were gonna go up to the Holiday Inn Dome," and we're, and everybody's going, and I'm going, "Oh yeah, you, you're going! I'm going too!" [EN and EP laugh] Ah, and there was just a yeah, just a lot of nurturing, but also professional development opportunity that ah, have come from ah, my association with younger professionals. And so I feel ethically there's a responsibility that I have to, um, promote that and to keep that going. And it's just a natural. I mean, you know, I'll be at the cleaners you know, and some bright girl is behind the counter, and I'll go, "So what do you do? Are you in school?..." [EP laughs]

EN: Right, I do that too sometimes when I meet people. Young students.

EP: And they don't know me from Adam [EP and EN laugh].

EN: I know!

EP: But you know what, it, it's like, I, I don't know how not to do that.

EN: Yeah. It's like you're really moving into their space when you do that though. [EP Laughs] But sometimes they really are. It seems like they are glad to have someone ask.

EP: Well, you know Ellen, I kinda feel like there is some [EP sighs]...when you see something to be done. You see it! I think it's then, it's your job to, to do something. Um, you know I was, I was at a buffet at ah, one of those, like Old Towne Buffet places.

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: And there was this group of guys and they were just cussing and slurring and um, the were like, they were teenagers and there was a group of elderly people at a table right next to them. And it was on a Sunday. And you could tell that they had just come from church, okay, they had their hats on and um, these guys were being who they were. And I was observing this and, ah, I was with some other people. And I said, "You know what, I feel like I, I need to go and say something to them." And they said, "Oh my God! Don't you do that." You know, [EN laughs] but I could not eat my meal, I couldn't, I couldn't. So what I did was I went over to, and I mean, you know, they had the gold teeth and the, you know, they were just thugin' out. And I said, I went, and I said up to the lines and I whispered, "You may not realize it, but your voice carries." And I said, "It's all the people over here who obviously can hear what you're saying, are offended, and I know they are offended because they can hear your, your conversation." And you know that kid said, "Oh, excuse me, excuse me ma'am." You know he, he didn't go there with me, because, and but had I went up on him with, [voice changes to imply yelling] "Hey, why don't you...." You know would have met aggression with aggression...

EN: Yeah!

EP: He would have had to have, saved face.

EN: Sure.

EP: But instead, he told the rest of them, "Hey man, you see those people over there, why don't you act like you've got some sense? Why don't you lower your voice?" And I went up to the buffet with my plate, and this one little older lady said to me, "I don't know what you said to those boys, but thank you."

EN: Oh...

EP: You know, and I thought...

EN: That's so nice.

EP: Because it's about relationships with people. And you're always gonna have some idiots who don't wanna know how to act and how to behave. But you can't match their behavior with the same behavior. And so I think its that kind of role modeling that I think I'm responsible. I, I, that I'm supposed to do. You know, my sister she [EP laughs]...My sister is so corporate America [EN and EP laugh]. She says to me, "You wanna make some real money, let me know."

EN: [EP laughing] Shirley Portwood has a sister like that too.

EP: I know, she does! I know it.

EN: We have [intelligible] Washington, she didn't want to come to the hospital [intelligible] [EN and EP laughing]. Yeah, but I mean, she loves everybody, but she just has her own agenda.

EP: Oh yeah. She's gotta, and that's my sister. She was Vice-President, She's Vice-President at GMAC and she works out of the City, and ah, you know she and I were together at the Galleria [St. Louis, Missouri Mall] a little while back. And these two groups of girls were gonna fight right in the Galleria.

EN: Oh.

EP: Yeah, and ah, the police had been called.

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: And I ah saw, and I said to my sister, "I'm gonna go over there..." and she goes, "Don't you go over there, you don't know anything about what's going on. There could be weapons, you know the police is gonna take care of it." [EN and EP laugh] I couldn't. Ellen, I couldn't. These girls were like 15 years old.

EN: Yeah, uh-huh.

EP: I go over there, and I say, "Lemme tell you something, they're not gonna put up with what you all are doing here in this Galleria. They're not gonna have this. They're gonna take all of you, or some of you to jail. You don't need to go there. Um, what, what is the problem?" And the police at that time was kind of on the perimeter because at least they had stopped being loud and listening to what I was saying. So the police were kinda letting me do this, um, and I said, "What's going on?" And it was over some boy. And um, I just started talking about, "Well, you know what, there is a possibility that there just might be something more important than this boy."

EN: Right.

EP: "Like you not getting a record, and maybe...And, and where do you go to school?" And what, we sat down, my sister went over to the Annie's Cookies or whatever it was, and she brought cookies over there, and she went back to where she was standing [EP and EN laugh]. And we just kinda sat, and we talked, both factions. And until we had kinda diffused the situation, you know, by then, and ah, these people had been friends. They had been friends. And so we just kinda got to the heart of the matter, you know, "You were just trying, what, what do you want?" "No, what do you want in your life." That's what's really important, "What do you want." They really hadn't been asked about their future, well, "What do you mean?"

EN: Right now...

EP: "I've got right now down. I don't know about tomorrow." Well, you get to say. Did you ever think about that? You really get to say! So, I have the kind of job that I would do if I couldn't get paid. And I don't feel that it's a job at all. And I feel blessed to be in that kind of opportunity, where there's so many people... um, and I'm glad I don't talk to them every day, who hate their jobs. There are a lot of people who do not like what they do; they make a lot of money. And um, they don't like what they do. I would do what I do if they didn't pay me. And my sister says, "They don't!" [EP and EN laugh] My sis...and you know what I mean. Because you're the same way. You're the same way. And students talk, they talk about you, they talk about, they talk

about people who they don't feel are advocates. People, you know students...so, it's one of those occupations you know, student relations, um, student advocacy, that has its own rewards, um, that go far beyond monetary compensation. And I'm not starving to death, I mean, you know. Uh, uh, but it's, it's not for the money that we do what we do.

EN: Um-hmm.

EP: And I love it.

EN: Yeah.

EP: And people say to me, "Are you still working, or are you retired..."

EN: Oh, goodness. I was gonna skip this, but its still going, yeah, that's good [talking about the recorder].

EP: [EN and EP laugh] Yeah.

EN: Retired! Whoa.

EP: Yeah, I'm going. I'm still working.

EN: Well I always think, that well um, you would get stolen away. You must have been hunted by head hunters [EP laughs]. You know, never mind you don't have to tell me about that, I'm not a...

EP: You're so dear!

EN: But I always imagined that, you know, people are gonna come walking in here from different places and...

EP: Well see my family is here, my Mom is 82.

EN: Oh, I see.

EP: And she's still living in Alton, by herself. Or she thinks she's living independently, ah [EN and EP Laugh]. My sister lives in Godfrey.

EN: Uh-huh, that's nice.

EP: So this is my home, and ah, I really am enjoying being *here* and giving back to my community of Alton, that's where I was raised. And so I'm in an organization that has a mentoring program for young girls in Alton. It's Alpha Kappa Alpha Sorority, and we um, have a group called Tomorrows Girls, and ah, we reach other to ah, I don't know what you'd call these girls, but um...underrepresented, or at risk or whatever they might be um, and ah, you know, we, we do programming that ah, kinda takes them out of their element. You know, and, and ah, um, we have them do community service with us, we go to nursing homes and, you know, and they say, "Do you know anybody there?" "Well, no!" No, we don't. "Well, I only go when I go to see my grandma." But there is something about giving back. You know I didn't know you until I met you and said hello. There's something about giving back, you don't, "It feels good to you to know somebody is going to give something to you who doesn't know you, that's why we go into the nursing homes." "Oh, okay." [EN laughs] You know, but...

EN: That's powerful.

EP: Yeah, yeah, these little girls, and they give so much to us. You know how that is.

EN: Yes.

EP: Um, and, and it's, I think it's... it's the thing that is necessary. When we are looking at the kinds of communities that we have today, kinda world that we have today. We've got to have some of these things in place and the expectancy that you're going to do it too. That somebody did it for you, and that you're going to be doing something positive. We've got to have that built in because we've got too many other things built in that are not supportive.

EN: Uh-huh. Did you go to SIU?

EP: No, I went to ISU [Illinois State University]...

EN: Oh, ISU, that's right you mentioned that.

EP: For my... Yep, I went, went to Bloomington for my Grad and Undergrad. And ah, I went to SLU [St. Louis University] for...

EN: For your Ph.D.

EP: Yeah, which I couldn't believe I was doing at such an old age [both EN and EP laugh].

EN: Oh, dear.

EP: I was so glad when it was *done*!

EN: Uh-huh.

EP: And my students were too because I was saying things like, "Don't you tell me what you can't do. I'm working full time and...." They were going, "Oh, Lord. I'll be glad when she's done." [EN and EP both laugh] But, but again it was an opportunity to be a testimony for our students. "Yeah, you can do, what you're, what you're doing." "Sure you can, you know!"

EN: Well, when you were at ISU, was there any kind of ah, um, obviously a person like you wouldn't need this, but was there any kind of mentoring program...

EP: When I was at ISU, absolutely, there was a program.

EN: With your networks...

EP: Yes there was, it was called HPS, High Potential Student Program. And that was, that was at Illinois State, and I was in that program. And my mom, my mom went to 8th grade. Our dad died, um, we, you know, we didn't have.... [Phone rings] Let me get this because I have a painter at my house.

EN: A painter.

EP: Uh-huh, he's painting and uh [Phone continues ringing, EP answers phone] "Hello," "Yes." "Look for the what?" "The...the truck of the paint?" "Oh, the book!" "No, I have the color chart, is that what you mean? No, she has, she had a magazine we were going off the color of the wall that was in this magazine that she has, yeah, it's a magazine. I've got the color chart." "It was um, Florida, it was Florida something or another." "I'm gonna call her um, and see if she can tell, tell...." [recording stops and starts again]

EN: Okay.

EP: That's, that's not been said. I just ah, you know. I'm a student advocate and enjoy it and hope that I'm, you know, helping somebody get through the process.

EN: Good, I'm hoping this...in the new, in the new administration, that you know, that you're much more visible and everything. I think you have been for the last year or two anyway but... [EP laughs] And thank you so much for taking time for this interview.

EP: Oh, my pleasure.

EN: Now, I told you, I think in my email, that this is your intellectual property, so I transcribe this, and it won't...[recording ends]