

University of Illinois Student Life, 1928-1938
Oral History Project
Aurelio (Joe) Florio '34
Urbana, Illinois
January 17, 2001

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Ellen Swain: This is an Oral History interview for University of Illinois Archives. The interviewer is Ellen Swain. The narrator is Joe Florio, a U of I alumnus from the class of 1934. We are at Mr. Florio's home in Urbana, Illinois, and the date is January 17, 2001.

Can we start first by telling me your full name and birth date?

Joe Florio: My full name Aurelio Eugene Florio, and I was born June 27, 1910 in Chicago. I worked on the playgrounds in Chicago for the Board of Ed. I wouldn't want to work on the playgrounds all my life, so I got a wire from George Huff. And George Huff said, "You were recommended, we're putting on two or three graduate assistants and you've been recommended by some of your old professors. \$80 a month: for 10 months \$800." So I didn't know what to do, I just got assigned to a new playground in Chicago for \$180 a month, but my fiancé was working in a settlement house in Chicago so I didn't know what to do. So I made one of my smart decisions. I came down here for \$800 a year teaching: half time, physical education, yeah. But, our college, it wasn't a college then it was school of Physical Education, and they didn't have a Masters program in anything, so I switched over to Sociology. I had a pretty strong minor in Sociology. So I switched over to Sociology and the head of the department didn't know if I was smart enough to be in Sociology, a PE major in Huff, but I had two good professors in Sociology, so they vouched for me, so I finally was accepted in the Department of Sociology.

ES: Now are you speaking after you graduated from the U of I, you came back down to teach?

JF: Yeah, yeah.

ES: How did you come to the U of I as an undergraduate?

JF: Well, I was always in sports on playgrounds in Chicago in High School.

ES: Where did you go to high school?

JF: I went to Austin High School, which is the far west part of Chicago: right in the middle of the city. I always was at end, we had a very good playground, the women playground teacher, and she says, "Joe," she says, "You ought to go to college with all your activities, and sports, and stuff." And so she, she says, "You could go to Chicago Teacher's College." And so, I found out you had to pass quite a few tests to get in Chicago Teacher's, because at that time most of the Chicago teachers, particularly elementary, had to be graduates of Chicago Teacher's College. Well, she

tried to tutor me in Music, and I didn't know a note from an atom's apple, she tried hard. I finally² decided maybe I could go to Notre Dame, but I didn't have enough courses to go to Notre Dame. So I inquired down here and they said, "You've got enough, but you need two units of science." So I went to the Y, the downtown YMCA in Chicago and I caught with two units of science and that's why I came down to the University.

ES: When did you come here? When did you start?

JF: I came, 1930. Class of 1934.

ES: What was that like? What was the transition?

JF: Well, it was, there weren't any men's dormitories. The big field west of Huff Gym was where, the open field. So I came down, and most people lived in private rooming houses or fraternities or sororities and so on. So there were three of us from Austin High that came down and we lived in a private home on Oak Street in Champaign, that's next to the railroad track over there. So that's how I came down to Illinois. The tuition was good. The tuition was \$25 a semester for the first year, and the second year it was \$35 a semester. So that's why I came to Illinois and they had Mr. Huff. George Huff had started the first Athletic Coaching Program, a school for athletic coaches and that appealed to me too, so I came down here. And I got into that program.

ES: That's what you wanted to do?

JF: Yeah. So when I came down, teaching half time. One of my professors that I had, I think he recommended me, was corrective physical education. Kids that, were under weight, or over weight, or had some kind of physical condition, were assigned to a course called Corrective PE. So I taught that for a couple years. There were under weights and over weights. But you had to have to have 2 years of PE before you could graduate, so I had a lot of undergraduate misfits and so on. But I enjoyed it, because I had worked under this professor for the handicapped. So I got started with that, and then I did that for two years, and then I, they asked me to stay on full time. So I became a full time instructor at \$180 a month. You know and then we got married in 37. So that's how I started down here.

ES: How, how were you able to afford to come down here as an undergrad

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JF: Well, see when I got out of High School I worked for a year and half.

ES: You did?

JF: In a Western Electric in Chicago. So I worked for them and had a little money. I splurged most of it the first year. The second year, I didn't have any resources. My father was working three days a week with six kids, five boys and one girl. So, my dad said, "We can probably send you \$15 a month, that could pay for a room then." So I came down and got meal jobs. I get a new job in a private boarding house or in a fraternity of a sorority, and that's how I got my meals. And I switched around to quite a few places. Normally in those Depression days, fraternities used to

switch with other fraternity's meal jobs, so they wouldn't have that many to feed and they had an³ exchange program. So I worked in the DU House, a lot with Scotty Reston.

ES: Is that right?

JF: Yeah, I worked with Scotty Reston.

ES: What can you tell me about him?

JF: Well he was quite a character, very funny, very, very nice guy. He could talk the cook out of doing any work at all. And he lived with these two Kamm brothers, so that worked. They lived across in the Sigma Pi house. And the other guys that worked there, exchange students, were two Phi Deltas, their house was right near the DU house, so they exchanged for them. So that's how a lot of them did that. So I worked the DU house for a while, then I got laid off and I worked in the Cosmopolitan Club for a while and then I worked in a Catholic fraternity on Green Street, don't remember. I worked there for a year. Then I went back to the DU house my Junior and Senior year, which was kind of tough, because I was on the Varsity Soccer team, we had Varsity Soccer. And so during the season I was a waiter, but I couldn't wait tables so I worked in the kitchen washing dishes. And then on work days, I'd go over, almost every morning, and peel a bucket of potatoes for that day. So, that's how I got my meals. I think it was my Junior and Senior year, the Federal government came out with a program of support for college students, they could make \$19 a month. So I worked for one of my professors, Dr. Staley. Who later became our dean. I worked for him on research projects where you had to do paper and pencil stuff and take five and scratch, there was no computers in those days. Well that's how I came down here, and then they offer me a full time job. So I stayed and I got my Masters in Sociology, then, and then they asked me to stay on.

ES: What year was that, that you got your Masters?

JF: That was 35.

ES: 35?

JF: Yeah, uh-huh, yeah.

ES: Did you get any money from being on the Varsity Soccer team?

JF: Oh no, no.

ES: No scholarship or--?

JF: We were on low on the totem pole for any support, soccer, and was, they considered it a minor sport. But we had a good team, and we played quite a few games, but nobody gave the soccer team a banquet, like they do for basketball, football, and track. So Mr. Huff invited us to his home for a banquet dinner, and so, with our soccer coach, who is also the gymnastic coach. So we were invited to Mr. Huff's home, which is a big home on University Avenue. And boy, his, he had a

colored waiter coming out with a platter of steaks. And just shove them off as you finish on. I sat⁴ near Mr. Huff and said, “Boy wish I could eat like you guys.” He was not well at that time, because he died in 36, right after that.

ES: Did you know him well?

JF: I know him fairly well, because he had, a locker in the same locker room for the faculty in George Huff Gym. So we’d come in there once and a while, I didn’t know him very well, but I knew who he was. He was a big, robust man. Quite a man, he did so much for sports, he started sports, he played sports, he did everything. One thing I do remember, we used to have a 16 team high school tournament, state tournament. And one time, one of the teams started booing one of the referees, because they went off the court. At half time Mr. Huff went out in the middle of the court with a microphone, and says, “If there is another ‘boo’ in this gymnasium, they’ll never be another 16 team tournament here.” He had a good, he developed Illini Code of Sportsmanship, which was the, which was good. You don’t see that now at the basketball games.

ES: What was the Tribe of Illini?

JF: That was our men’s I-Men, Tribe of Illini. And I got my letter in soccer at that banquet Mr. Huff gave us. And Seely Johnston [Mr. Shelby Himes, as changed by Mr. Florio], who owned the sporting goods store on the campus, he says, “Boys, bring those sweaters over to the store tomorrow and I’ll put the, sew the I-Men on the sweaters for what it cost me.” So that’s how we got an I sweater.

ES: Oh how nice.

JF: Yeah. That was one of the highlights in my athletic career. When I was playing soccer I couldn’t wait tables, so I peeled potatoes [laughter].

ES: [Laughter] Is that how you knew Scotty Reston, were you on the Soccer Team together?

JF: Yeah, we worked in the same kitchen, he showed up at the same kitchen. He’d sit and talk to the cook most of the time. He’s has a nice personality you know? Yeah, he was a fraternity brother of the Kamm brothers. Then we had 2 Phi Deltas, their house was right near the DU house and they worked there too.

ES: Did you ever belong to a fraternity?

JF: No, I was asked, by the two Phi Deltas my Senior year when I had my I sweater sewn on. And I was dating a gal from Northwestern at that time, so I talked to her, and she said, “Well, Joe, you done pretty well without joining a fraternity.” I couldn’t afford one anyway, probably. So.

ES: How did Independents and Greeks get along on campus?

JF: Oh they got along. See the independents, most of them lived in rooming houses or old dorms. We had a dorm for women, but there were no dorms for men. So they got along pretty well. They

had their own organizations. And everybody, all, if they could afford to live in fraternity houses,⁵ and the girls lived in sorority houses. There was only one dorm over in Urbana, and that was Busey-Evans, I think, or something like that.

ES: What did you do for fun? With a limited budget.

JF: Well, my dad could send me \$15, that took care of the room, then I scrounged around for meal jobs, and then I'd get a meal job here and a meal job there. And then I ended up full time at the DU house and that's how I got my meals.

ES: But what did you do for fun? What did you do on dates, or did you do that if you had a girlfriend at Northwestern?

JF: Well, I did trek up there once and a while. And one time she hitchhiked down here. I met her at a summer camp, west of Chicago. So I said, she said, "Some of us are coming down to the Pi Phi sorority." They were Pi Phi's up there, so they were coming down. And I says, "Well, we're playing Wisconsin that morning, that field south of Huff." So she, I kept looking for her, but she came with the three sorority girls to the field south of Huff Gym. She said she saw me, but my hair was up and I was sweating and limping around with a bad knee and she said, "I guess he's not playing today." But, I met her later on that night. She didn't want her sorority girls with the character I looked like at the soccer game. But those were the early days.

ES: Did you go to dances or--?

JF: Yeah we went to dances, there were dances at Huff Gym for, with all the Big Bands. Jan Garber, Wayne Kane, Guy Lombardo, all those big bands played there. Sometimes I, I didn't have money for a date, sometimes would get me someone for a date, and that allows you to pay a quarter and sit up on the balcony and listen to all evening. Which my wife and I did after we were married. And we'd go to dances. They had the Freshman Frolic, Sophomore Catillion, Junior Prom, and the Senior Ball. Those were the big dances, all in Huff Gym.

ES: Did everyone participate in that the sororities and the independent students?

JF: Yeah, yeah it was a mix. Pretty good mix.

ES: How were the athletes on campus viewed, did they have a--?

JF: They were accepted.

ES: They had a status?

JF: Yeah, they had a sort of a elevated status, an I Man was considered something. So, in those days, you want me to tell you some things that went on?

ES: Oh sure.

JF: Well, freshman wore green little beanie hats. Engineers wore corduroy pants, the Law 6 students, the Law School was in Altgeld Hall then, the Law Students carried a cane, swinging along. And then in the Spring they had a cap burning, and the firemen would build a small fire west of Huff Gym and we'd circle around and circle around, and throw our caps in the fire. Well, it got out of hand, and they started tearing each other's clothes off, and there was a big line formed and they went through the stores on John Street and Green Street, and stole stuff. As a result, the University took away the Sophomore Cotillion funds, so we didn't have a sophomore Cotillion the following year, but that's what some of them did.

ES: Did all the freshman men wear caps or was it the fraternity freshmen? Was it everyone?

JF: No I wore a cap.

ES: You did?

JF: And I wasn't in a fraternity. I think anybody who wore a cap—

ES: All the freshman?

JF: All the freshman, yeah. They were green beanie hats, a green thing that sat on top of your head.

ES: [Laughter] Where did you wear them?

JF: Pardon?

ES: Where did you wear them? To class?

JF: Oh I suppose, yeah, I suppose. I don't know where I got mine, that's a long time ago [laughter].

ES: [Laughter] Do you remember a Dean of Men, Thomas Arkle Clark?

JF: Yeah, I knew his nephew who worked in his office.

ES: Oh.

JF: Yeah, so I knew him, I didn't know Dean Arkle Clark. I knew of him.

ES: Knew of him? What were student's impressions of him?

JF: Oh like an overseer, sometimes trying to oversee too much, you know. I knew, Tommy Arkle Clark? Yeah.

ES: Did they like him, or was he--?

JF: Oh I guess so, he was considered just somebody that tried to overlook the actions of the freshman, or all the students. Tommy Clark. 7

ES: I've heard that people said he had a spy system among the students, did you know anything about that?

JF: No. Maybe fraternity people knew about it, but we never heard of any spy system.

ES: How did students feel [during] the Depression? Did you get a sense that a lot of them were hurting or--?

JF: I think, we got an increased enrollment during the Depression, because no one could find jobs, so a lot of them came down to school and the tuition was cheap, twenty-five dollars a semester.

ES: You said you were on the Soccer Team, were you in any other activities?

JF: Intramural, we played intramural. I was on a team that played for the Intramural Softball Championship. I can't remember whether we won it or lost it. But intramurals wasn't as big then as it was now. Mr. Manley, who was the swimming coach, was also the intramural director. So we didn't have anything like they have now. There was a good intramural program. They had water polo in Huff Gym. The water in Huff Gym is all 7 foot deep, all built primarily for water polo. So when I was going over to Huff Gym, I used to go 3 days a week to workout at Huff. I swam, aquajogged and did exercises, so that's why that pool was 7 foot deep all the way.

ES: What was the student body make up like, were there--?

JF: Well there were more, I think more men, I can't remember whether there were more men or women, they used say the women come down here to find a husband, so there must have been more men than women [laughter].

ES: Do you remember being in class with Black students or Jewish students?

JF: No, I don't remember. I don't remember many black students at that time. And I was a little sur--, well I don't think I was surprised. One of my best chums in grade school was a black student. We'd compete in track and I always saw his back ahead of me [laughter]. But I don't remember many black students, they probably had some, I don't recall.

ES: How big a role did religion play in student's lives?

JF: Well, I think the churches had good programs. Newman Hall was a Catholic, Presbyterian Hall, and there was a Christian Church on the corner, it's changed now, on the corner of 6th and John, a Congregational Church. Those were the three I knew of in Champaign. And then, Wesley Foundation was for students, because it was right on the campus. Well the others were on the campus practically, Newman Hall and the Baptist Foundation, the Presbyterian Foundation, yeah. Well, I don't know what percentage went to churches or not. Our son was very active in our Methodist Church in high school. When he got to college, he forgot. He was active in the Sunday

school programs and he had junior high program, but when he got to college. . .my daughter, well⁸ she was in the sorority, but I don't know if she ever went when she was student. They sort of dropped interest.

ES: Were there divisions between Protestant and Catholic students on campus?

JF: No, I don't think there was any, I don't recall any. Those foundations were pretty active in themselves. And the students would join the foundations and participate in what the activities were. I used to go, I had some, in the rooming house I lived there were three Catholics, so they dragged me to Newman Foundation one time, the Catholic Church. The thing I remember was [laughter], later on I remember Tommey, he was a track athlete and I knew him in the Navy they came down the aisle with a container and you had pay \$.10 for your seat in the Catholic Church.

ES: What about political activities? Were students involved in--?

JF: Not much, I don't recall. Students had to work hard in those days. I don't remember, the only reason I remember about politics, one of the Presidents came through on the train, and a lot of students went down just to see the President. I can't remember which one it was, he was defeated I think. He came down through downtown Champaign – Urbana, on the back of the train and everybody wanted to see the candidate, yeah.

ES: Were students aware of national events going on?

JF: I don't know if they were or not. Well from the people I connected with, there weren't too much interest in politics I don't think. You know they were, a lot of students had real jobs, so they were busy doing that. Some had to work jobs on the side too. One of my roommates my sophomore year was a janitor in Lincoln Hall; that's how he got his money to pay for his room and board.

ES: How many people lived in your boarding house?

JF: In the boarding house?

ES: Boarding house, was it a close group?

JF: Let's see, there were one, two, three, yeah, I think there were six of us. Two on the first floor, four on the second floor. In the second rooming house, oh there were about the same, four or five, sometimes six. The first rooming house I lived in, on the boulevard, near the railroad track. We paid \$25 a month with three meals, and then I had classes that were in what is now Kinney Hall, we used to call it the Old Men's Gym, over on Springfield. We had, we had to hike back and forth, and Mr. Huff taught some classes in Huff and we had classes in the Kinney Gym, and somehow we'd come late. He says, "Fellows, I can make it from Kinney Gym here on time for class, you can't stop and gossip with anybody. [laughter]"

ES: Is that primarily where your classes were, in Kenney or in Huff?

JF: Kenney or in Huff, and in like History and Sociology were mostly in Lincoln Hall, or the old Farm Building, Ag Building. It had a big auditorium in there. Big crowd of students.

ES: Who were your favorite professors?

JF: Oh, Mr. Huff was one. My soccer coach was another.

ES: Who was that?

JF: He taught—Hartley Price, he was the gymnastic coach, but he coached soccer too. So I had him for classes. And then I had G. Huff for some classes, he taught Administration, of a sports and athletics and stuff. And then I had a History professor that I sort of, kind of liked, her name was Emila Ruth King. I think she liked the athletes too [laughter]. And, there weren't many professors that I disliked. You didn't have a chance to dislike anybody.

ES: Where did you wear your letterman jacket? Did you where that all the time?

JF: Yeah. No we had a special day. Thursday was I Men's Day. So you wore your I Men's sweater on Thursday.

ES: Every Thursday?

JF: Every Thursday. So you'd see the I Men sport and I-sweater. That used to be the I Men's Association, now it's changed, it's the Varsity I Association, 'cause we got women in it now.

ES: Did you have events? Did you get together and do things, or was it--?

JF: Well every Thursday, I think it was every Thursday, or maybe it was once a month, I don't remember, a fraternity or sorority would give up their dinner at night and turn it over to the I Men's Association. I Men ushered at football and basketball games. You got paid \$3, but it's the soccer men were last on the totem pole. But, I knew the administrator of that, so once and a while I'd get a chance to usher a football and make \$3. Which was alright in those days.

ES: Yeah.

JF: Yeah.

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ES: I wanted to ask you about Homecoming and what was involved?

JF: At Homecoming? Well, all the houses had decorations, fraternity houses, and then they had Homecoming parade, had Homecoming, Pep Rally on the campus, that part of the Union wasn't built, at that time. So the coach and some players would come on Friday night and they had a Pep

Rally, and cheers, coaches, and some players came. So that's what they prepared. They had a 10 big parade on Friday night and most of the fraternity houses had decorations and one or two independents had decoration for Homecoming. It was a big Homecoming affair, yeah.

ES: What did you do at the football games?

JF: Well, I don't know if I had a Block-I at that time or not. I can't recall, if they had a Block-I. I think they had some sort of a cheering section, you know? So, and we used buy a coupon book for \$3, which would go to every sport.

ES: Including football?

JF: Including basketball. Later on they had a coupon book. You could buy one but it did not include football, basketball, no.

ES: Uh-huh.

JF: All the other sports. My wife went to Northwestern, so I hitchhiked up there, and, so I'd bet on every Illinois event against Northwestern, and you know Northwestern, I bet on every sport. I think the only, and this was for a milkshake, the only milkshake that she won, when Northwestern had a good tennis team. So she at the end of the year, she owed me 20 milkshakes. So I said, "When are you going to, start to paying them off?" She says, "Didn't you read the stipulation, you gotta them all at one time." I got one milkshake out of that.

ES: And you did it?

JF: One, I just did one.

ES: How did you meet your wife, were you a student?

JF: We were, no she was a student at Northwestern. We met at a big United Charities, Chicago Tribune Camp on the Fox River, about 35, 40 miles northwest of Chicago. She was, Soc. Recreation major up there. And I met her there at the camp. So I'd go up once and a while if I could hitchhike and my folks lived in the west part of Chicago, so I could stay there, so we did that for a while, by the time I came a full-time job in 37, and then we got married in 37.

ES: I see, and she moved down her?

JF: Pardon?

ES: She moved down here and then--?

JF: Yeah, after she, well she worked in Chicago one year 35, and then we became engaged. She was head of the Social House for a while, and then she went back home to Indiana, learned how to do housekeeping or something, which was not her strong point. Now she's over that way, everything has to be this way, that way. Well we live in a two bedroom expanded apartment, so

they're very nice. We have 2 bedrooms, two baths, one with shower, and we have a storage room right off the kitchen, and we have storage space in each apartment. So it's nice set up. 11

ES: When you came down here, did you have a hard time adjusting to rural life, having lived in the city?

JF: No, because you didn't know it was rural life, students were students, you didn't know where they came, a lot of them were rural, a lot of them were urban. Well, three or four guys in my first rooming house were all from the Chicago or Oak Park, suburbs. You didn't notice. The only Ag guys I knew, were two of them that were on the soccer team with me. So I knew them. No difference you know, yeah.

ES: Did the soccer team travel?

JF: Yes, we were the first team to ever play Penn State, at State College Pennsylvania.

ES: Is that right?

JF: We went there on an old bus. You know there were no super highways then. So one time, we got near Ft. Wayne, Indiana, and one of the wheels came off the bus. And so, we got it fixed the next day, and it started snowing. And they were having big dinner for us. The first time the Fighting Illini the Nittney Lions, and we were supposed to get in there around 6 o'clock, we didn't get there until 10 that night. Windy roads, snow, and they were NCAA champs for two years. The next morning, we played in about two and a half, three feet of snow. The ball never went out of bounds and when you headed it, you'd feel it all the way to your toes. The ball would get soaking wet and then they'd change balls once in a while. Then, yeah, we'd play there, we played at Wisconsin, we played at Ohio State, we played at Oberlin. And then we played a couple club teams, and then that's when we got our Varsity I. But my brother came down in thirties, he graduated in 37, 30. He played on the soccer team. But because they didn't have enough Big Ten teams, they counted Notre Dame, you didn't get Varsity I's, you had to play so many Big Ten minutes with other schools, to get the Varsity I. So they, my brother, together and bought a gold watch for the coach [laughter]. Yeah, yeah.

ES: Why was soccer not popular do you think?

JF: Well nobody played soccer, I played on the playgrounds of Chicago that's where I learned some of the fundamentals. So then I just said, well I'll go out for the freshman team." But the coach said, "No you come out, you can practice with the Varsity." Which I did, and then I played my junior and senior years. Yeah, yeah we traveled to Wisconsin, Penn State, Oberlin, Notre Dame. Notre Dame came down here and played us up there. They had a short field, and they beat us 3-to-2. They were foreigners who played soccer. They knew how to play it. So they came down here to play us and we had a maximum size field, south of Huff Gym. By the half time, those guys had their tongues hanging out, running back and forth, so we beat them down here.

ES: How was your record?

JF: We had a pretty good record, I think it was 8 and 3 or something. I didn't notice until I got¹² a Varsity I letter, our coach had claimed the Midwestern Soccer Program Champions.

ES: I was wondering if you remembered any rules that were for students, what were the requirements?

JF: You could not walk across the campus, nobody was allowed on the campus, on the grass. They had two policemen on the force then. Old Pete with a big cane, roamed around the campus, and if he saw anyone roaming on the grass he had a big brimmed club, like a cane, and then he had a whistle. He'd blow that whistle and say, "Get of the campus, get of the campus!" Then you could, I came from Chicago, so you could take the train to Chicago round trip for \$3. That was one rule you couldn't walk on the campus. Oh, you were not allowed to clime on the Alma Mater, which was in the south end of the Assembly Hall, not the Assembly Hall, but the auditorium.

ES: Follinger.

JF: Yeah, yeah.

ES: Students do that?

JF: They found—Oh yeah, one of the policeman found an unconscious gymnast one morning, he was up on top of the Alma Mater, sun just came out, doing handstands and he fell off, and became unconscious. So they found him and I assume they took him to a hospital. That was another thing you couldn't do. Yep.

ES: Was drinking a problem?

JF: No, because all they had was three percent Near Beer they called, it was three percent alcohol. But some of the students who had access to Chemistry would get little vials of alcohol and spike the three percent beer with it. Yep. I couldn't even buy a beer.

ES: Were the rules different for men and women?

JF: I don't recall any. My wife was a Pi Phi, and the Dean of Women was a Pi Phi, and her name was, I had it on the tip of my tongue, Maria Leonard, Maria Leonard. The gym, the women gym teachers, the gym women who had to take PE had black bloomers, down about their knees in the PE classes [*laughter*], yep. And they had two years PE, which is now, what is the building south of Lincoln Hall?

ES: The Women's. . .Henry, oh south!

JF: Yeah south.

ES: Gregory.

JF: Not Gregory, south of Gregory. English Building?

ES: The English Building.

JF: That's what, there was a swimming pool in there too, a small pool, and that's where they taught PE, because Freer Gym wasn't built then, it was built much later.

ES: Did, did you get a sense of how the women viewed Maria Leonard? Did they like her, or--?

JF: I don't remember, I don't remember. My wife got to know her because she was a Pi Phi, and they would get together once and a while.

ES: After she moved down here?

JF: Yeah. Then they built Freer Hall, that one became the Women's Gymnasium, yeah, which is now on the south end of the campus.

ES: Did women have sports? Did people attend their events?

JF: No, the women had a field hockey team. You know Women's Hockey? They would play intramural teams from other schools near Freer, or the athletic field they had near there.

ES: That was totally different than George Huff's?

JF: Oh yeah.

ES: He didn't have any contact like that, women's side of it?

JF: No, Miss Freer, Louise Freer was the head of PE. You would never think she would have anything to do with PE. She was quite a lady, she always wore white gloves and a hat, so on. I think we'd meet the women once in a while, you know at social events. Women, yeah.

ES: Did they have something comparable to the I Club?

JF: I think they did. It wasn't the same.

ES: They didn't wear clothing on it?

JF: I think they had some kind of small varsity letter thing, I don't remember for sure. Then maybe I remember some of them having an I, but they didn't have an I-Men Association.

ES: You graduated in 1934?

JF: Yeah.

ES: Where was Commencement, or do you remember, did your parents come down?

JF: Yes. Yes, my parents come down, it was in Huff Gym. If the weather was bad, good they might have it in the stadium. But they didn't have it in the stadium, they had bleachers set up in Huff Gym and my parents came down, my younger brother came down. He came, he was a student here in '37, he graduated in '37, '38. So they came down and watched the first member of the family graduate from college.

ES: Was that a big event for them? Was education important?

JF: Well it was for them. Yeah I was the first college graduate in the family, and my second brother went to Junior College for a couple years, but he wasn't interested in going further than my, further than my fourth brother, we had five boys in the family. He was the one that came down here, he graduated in Journalism. He was a sports writer for the *Daily Illini*.

ES: I see, I see. And then after you graduated, what did you do?

JF: Well when I had been working on the Chicago Board of Education playgrounds during the summer as a substitute, after my sophomore year they had an exam and I passed the exam, so then I worked in summers on various playgrounds filling in two weeks there and two weeks there. Just as I got a wire from G. Huff, they offered me job working on the Head of the playgrounds, to offer me a full-time playground job, see? That's when I made my smart decision and came down here. Although the pay was \$80 a month, that was pretty good, in those days.

ES: And then you worked for him and what did your job involve? When you came down after you graduated?

JF: I taught Corrective PE.

ES: That's what you were talking about before?

JF: Yeah, then they changed the name to Adaptive Sports, Sports Adapted to the Condition, over weights, under weights, maybe heart cases stuff. And my professor, George Stafford, that was his specialty and I student taught under him, and I think that's why I was invited down to teach that. Then I taught some academic classes like Safety Education, I taught that, and then I taught the Corrective Theory course for PE and Health majors, I taught a couple academic courses, and then I taught a lot of different PE courses, activity course, because everyone had to have two years of PE. So then I started teaching, when I got my Masters, I started teaching mostly activity courses, PE activities, then I taught two academic courses, Safety Education and Corrective PE. I wrote a book on Safety Education later on, with my professor who got me started in Corrective, and my book was Safety Education.

ES: And you got your Masters in Sociology in 30?

JF: Thirty, lets see thirty, I worked on that 35, so I finished in, my Masters in 36, the year of 36, because then they asked my full-time, PE, so I got, it was the year of 36, and I got full-time in PE and health starting the fall of 37.

ES: Since that time you've been at the University and teaching PE and Health majors?

JF: Yes, I spent four years in the Navy, Naval Program, Navy Cadets for Flying. I was athletic officer, sports program for the Navy. At that time the Navy Cadets had to be College graduates, to become flyers, so I spent four years in the Navy. From early 42 to almost early 45.

ES: Where were you?

JF: Oh, I was, I started in, I was scheduled to go to Iowa City, that a great big Navy Pre-Flight School. The Navy had four big Pre-Flight schools, Iowa was one. But, we were training at Annapolis, the orders came out where we were supposed to go, I didn't go to Iowa City, that's where I thought they send me, because of soccer. I went and looked on the list and said, "Robinson, Missouri?" I thought Robinson, Missouri. So the head of our program, who was the athletic director at that time at Annapolis, I says, "Where is Robinson? Missouri?" That was the St. Louis Airport, down at Lambert Field, that was at Robinson, Missouri. So I went there for a couple years. I wanted to go to the west coast, and then the next orders I got was Olathe, Kansas. Then the next orders I got were for Norfolk, Virginia, with secret orders to be shipped out of the country. Then we flew to Florida, and one of my good pals could never pass the swimming test, and they wouldn't ship you around the country unless you could pass the swimming test. And we were both at St. Louis together, so I asked him, while we were there, in Norfolk, I said, "Is there a salt water body along here?" He says, "Yeah, there's a salt water place right, fenced off." The fellow's name, big heavy-set guy, he was a football player at Missouri, and I says, let's go over see what we can do. He passed the swimming test in the salt water, so he got shipped to Trinidad, and I got shipped to, eventually I went to Curesa, but then I went in San Juan for a while, and then I came back and finally got to Iowa City.

They didn't know what to do with me, because the War in Europe had ended, and so they were getting rid of all the Navy people in their dormitories, because students were coming back. So my main job when I got Iowa City, one of my good St. Louis friends was stationed there too. My main job, I taught beginning wrestling to some guys, two or three holds you could. But my other main job was to come in, and I played a lot of badminton, and I won the faculty staff championship. Somehow the Commanding Officer there knew that I could play badminton, so one of my orders was to show up at the gym ten, eleven o'clock and play badminton with him. One of the first few times he beat me, then I got going, I hadn't played in a while, then I kept beating him, so my orders were to show up at the gym. And he didn't like it when I beat him, but I played badminton there then they wanted us out of there because the students were coming back, yeah, so I got out in late 45. Shipped to Great Lakes and got my final orders there, so.

ES: And then you came back to U of I?

JF: Came back to U of I, I taught classes for about six or seven months in my Navy uniform, because I couldn't get into my civilian clothes, I put on a little weight, because I got dismissed there and came back here, and they wanted the faculty back right away I joined back on the staff. I got a \$200 raise when I was in the Navy, so my salary when I came back was \$2200 an academic year. But I came back, I told, my wife reminds of this, she says, "You remember the time when

you came back after the service and you could've played for the rest of your life for \$5000 year.”¹⁶ I says, “That doesn't even pay my Income Tax now!”

ES: I wanted to ask you two more things that I can think of. Did you have contact with the Presidents of the University when you were a student? Or, did you have impressions in, of, lets see, Chase and--?

JF: The only reason that I got contact with the President of the University of Illinois at that time, was because George Stafford taught me how to play badminton, and then taught badminton, because he liked to play badminton, so that's they only time I played badminton with the President.

ES: You had much contact with the President? And what President was that?

JF: I can't remember, he was only here for a couple years, it ought to be in the *Illio*.

ES: Oh back when you were an undergraduate?

JF: Oh this was after, when you were in--?

ES: Okay, okay.

JF: He was only here a short time.

ES: But when you were a student, did you have much contact with, or not much opinion?

JF: No, no, no. They were up in the 3rd floor of the Administration Building.

ES: What did students wear? Just to go to class?

JF: Oh, well did I tell you the Engineering students wore yellow corduroys?

ES: Right, they had special things. But just general students, did they dress up for class?

JF: Oh, no they didn't, they kind of wore shorts in the summer, blue jeans. They didn't dress, they dressed a lot better than what the students wear today. You know they were going to academic classes and so on, so they wore, they didn't wear sloppy clothes.

ES: This was back when you were a student?

JF: At school, yeah. And even after, because I had a Graduate Assistant later on, who helped me somewhat, classes, and he helped me do some work around my house, so I had him for dinner a couple times and I said, I think his name was, Tom. I says, “Why do the students wear such sloppy clothes, you know we were PE teachers, but if we taught an Activity Course we had wear white pants and a white shirt.” And so he says, “Oh they, I don't know, they just wore sloppy things.” So he got interested, so he and a couple other graduate students, built a questionnaire to ask the students what they thought of the faculty, particularly activity course. They didn't care what the

faculty wore, you now, any old thing, blue jeans, t-shirts. Except when you were in the academic¹⁷ area, then maybe they wore something better.

ES: When you were a student did the faculty and the students have a close relationship? Did you go over to faculty's homes? You said you went to George Huff's, at one point.

JF: Well that was when he gave us our I. But, um. . . . no not very much.

ES: You didn't have a--?

JF: No, no, we didn't have any social meetings with them.

ES: How has the U of I affected your life: positively or negatively?

JF: Oh well, it was one of the best things in my career. Coming here and graduating and being on the faculty for 40 some years. It hadn't caught up with me so I thought I better retire. I always prided myself being a faculty member. I don't think the young faculty think of Illinois as *the* thing. You know it's a college to go to, four years and your out. But then the students and the faculty were more loyal. They seemed more loyal, you know? So, yeah I was glad I got to go here.

ES: What did students think of Chief Illini wek?

JF: Well they never felt anything about him, like they do now. He was the accepted thing. He would dance at the football games, and other events, at banquets, you stuff like that?

ES: At banquets?

JF: Well, the band would come in, like a basketball, football banquet. Band would come in and play and he would dance up and down the aisle of one of the hotels or, some place. He was well accepted, not like they are now. No.

ES: Was he as popular? I mean was he as well liked then?

JF: Oh yeah, oh yeah, he was very popular.

ES: Was the dance similar to what it is today?

JF: Oh I think so, but I can't remember but.

ES: Looks the same.

JF: We'd have basketball games in Huff Gym. He'd come out and do a dance at half-time, well accepted, applauded and so on. Nothing like some students feel today. He was a popular half-time show person, Chief Illini wek. Yep.

ES: I think you've answered all my questions. Do you have anything to add?

JF: Well, good. No. I told you things I could remember. I was an independent, but they had dances in the YWCA, on Wright Street. So some of us who were not fraternity, or independent. I think every Friday they had a dance, so I go to the dances.

ES: Was that the student hangout, the YMCA?

JF: I don't know if it was hangout, but it was for women. They would sponsor a dance so the independent students would go to a dance on Friday, meet somebody there, temporary. I was invited to the Junior Prom when I was a freshman. I said, this fellow who roomed at our house, he said, "Joe this, my friend's got a girl who wants to go to the Junior Prom, and she said, 'See if you can find a date for me!'" Well, I didn't have money for tux or anything, but she took care of everything, so I went with her to the Junior Prom. She was a Junior. Very pleasant girl, pretty, but I had a hard time getting my arm around her back, she was kind of big. So I went to the Junior Prom [laugh], as a guest of somebody.

ES: Did you have friends in fraternities, or were your friends pretty much independents?

JF: Oh yeah, well I had friends in the fraternities, because we worked in the kitchens together.

ES: The fraternity members also worked in the kitchens?

JF: Oh yeah, they traded. In our kitchen we had 2 Phi Deltas.

ES: That's what you said.

JF: Scotty Reston and the Kamm brothers.

ES: Did you do other things with Scotty Reston? Did you socialize?

JF: No, well I, in a way I got to know him better I went out for Freshman soccer, cause I hadn't played soccer, and the coach invited me to come with the Varsity. He was captain of the Golf team and also played on the Varsity Soccer team, so that's how I got to know him. He was from Scotland, and so he knew how to play soccer. Yeah, yeah. He came back in a Convocation one time, and my daughter was in school then and my son too. So after he spoke, he went to a special room, where they had speakers and a little reception, and we were walking out and we ran into Scotty, and he remembered me. He says, "Yes, you were the pot and pan man when you weren't waiting tables, and you were the potato man." So we had a nice little chat with him, he was very pleasant.

ES: Did you know his wife, Sally?

JF: She was in school, I knew her, indirectly. She was either a Pi Phi or a Theta.

ES: She was a Theta.

JF: Theta yeah, she was. I just got to know her cause one of the guys who waited tables.

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END OF INTERVIEW.