

**University of Illinois Student Life, 1928 - 38:
Oral History Project
Royal Bartlett -- Class of '31
Denver, Colorado
November 7, 2000**

Ellen Swain: This is an oral history interview for the University of Illinois Archives. The interviewer is Ellen Swain. The narrator is Royal Bartlett, a U of I alumnus from the class of 1931. We're at Mr. Bartlett's home in Englewood, Colorado, and the date is November 7th, 2000.

Could you please state your full name and birth date?

Royal Bartlett: Royal C. Bartlett, born July 3rd, 1909.

ES: Ok. I wonder if we could first talk about your growing up years. Where you were born and your family in your younger years.

RB: Well my dad was superintendent of the DuPage County Farm, what we call "poor farm" at that time, and I was born on the poor farm, and I said, that's where I'm going to wind up [*laughter*]. That was near Wheaton, Il. And of course, that was the home of Red Grange, who was a hero to the University of Illinois in football. We were raised in the northern Illinois part, Wheaton, Elgin, most of our high school activities were in Elgin. That was the home of the Elgin Watch Company, 90 percent of the people in Elgin worked for the Elgin Watch Company. That was the institution that really ruled the city. And, in fact, Ford Motor Company wanted to come in at one time and the watch company had enough clout to keep them out because they didn't want to have to compete with the \$5 a day wages that Ford was going to offer the people. So, a little history of that. Then, I started at the University of Illinois in 1927, I had gone down there to a huge football game a year or so earlier and was attracted by the environment and the campus and the life down there. Good friend of mine who had graduated from high school a year before I did, and he said, "Well, I'll wait a year and we'll go together." So when a year passed and I graduated from high school things were getting a little tighter financially. Father had passed away and my mother was working, and it was going to be a little financial stress, tightening on us at the time. But she said, "Arthur," my friend, "had waited for you, you go and start." So we both went down there in the Fall of 1927, he lasted one year and found out that college wasn't for him and I wound up staying for the whole four years, and except for that commitment that my mother said we made to him, waiting, I probably wouldn't have gone to school at that time.

ES: Was education important to her?

RB: I think so.

ES: Important to her for you to go? How were you able to finance that?

RB: Well, I think I got a \$500 loan from the bank in Elgin, and of course at that time room was

about \$15 a month, board, I think, we paid either about \$7 a week for 20 meals, so it really in today's economics it didn't take much, and tuition was on \$25 a semester. So, you were playing it very close when you didn't have much, but it made it somewhat easier. And, there were a number of grants made, although I didn't have any, and during the summer months I was able to work in boys camps and get a little enough money to keep going there. We kind of lived hand-to-mouth there for a while. I think I had a lot, plenty of company down there under the same circumstances.

ES: Did you have a job while you were in school?

RB: Only partly, part time, I worked some for some meals, but not too much. I just concentrated on studying.

ES: Did other students have jobs while they were in school? Was that something that was common or—?

RB: Well, I think, the jobs that were prevailing were working either in the fraternities or the sororities. for your meals. I mean there was no industry there that, took anybody, it isn't like it is now. But that was an important part of your income, and cut down on your expenses.

ES: Do you remember your first day?

RB: First date?

ES: You're first day at the University? What. . .your first day when you came down?

RB: Well, the first day I can remember is when you went to register.

ES: What was that like?

RB: That was turmoil [*laughter*]. We come out of a pretty good sized high school, but I'd never been exposed to a big group like that. Not only registration for the classes you want, but the daily sequence of classes that would permit you to have some free time to work if you want, if you were able to find something to do, or also where they were located, because at the time you didn't have cars, there were no cars for students. I still think back now. How did we get from one building to another in the 10 minute break you had. We did in all kinds of weather, and I don't have too good a recollection of just how we did that! But, there was no transportation, you did it all by foot, that's why when you laid out your classes you watched where they were located, going to be held and how you could get back and forth. But it was, it was a great experience, and one thing kind of related to that. There would be a number of students who were transferring from small colleges, like the Normals and the Eureka's [Eureka College], and all those, and when they came from a small college of say 2- or 300 students, and Illinois had, at that time, about 10,000, they were lost, maybe even more so than new ones, because they had so much individual attention at these small colleges that you didn't get at the big university.

ES: Were they transferring for financial reasons?

RB: No, I think they wanted to, some of them were only two year colleges that they were at, and I think they wanted to get graduated from a bigger name university.

ES: How did you find housing, when you came down, where did you--?

RB: Well most of the housing was private homes. In fact, I stayed in the same place the whole four years.

ES: Where was that?

RB: 6th and Stoughton, it was just off where the old University baseball field. It was about a block away, and the old Men's Gym was in that area. And you were about, about three blocks North of Green Street. Engineering was all around that area. The Business School was further south.

ES: Was this a boarding house?

RB: Well, they didn't have any meals where we stayed but there were boarding houses in the area that we could sign up for our meals. And that's where I did.

ES: So it was just a private home that you lived in?

RB: Uh-huh. They'd probably take in, maybe a dozen students for a meal program. I don't know. The house I stayed at was four bedrooms upstairs so we had eight students. But the rooms were where we conducted our studies, because the bedrooms were more or less a dormitory activity up in the attic, so there was no heat up there [laughter]. And it was a good variety of people there. Out of the eight students you had, I think when I was a freshman, we had a couple of seniors, and a couple of freshmen, a mixture.

ES: Was that a social place? Was that where your friends, you met your friends? Did you meet your friends there? Was that your social--

RB: No, no. There wasn't really room for that, your social activity was down at the old YMCA on Wright Street, which it shared with the Illinois Union. But that was really, just a cramped up little place, they really didn't offer much in the way of social activities as they do today. And, I think, some of them had church groups, you know, that provided that. But, you know, it was far different then the programs that they now offer.

ES: What did you major in? What was your field?

RB: Accounting and banking.

ES: How did you choose, how did you come to choose that subject?

RB: Oh, I don't know, I guess I always had an interest in math in high school, keeping records. Illinois had a good reputation, and the thing that comes in light with that, when I was in school you didn't have recruiting, when you graduated you were on your own. I remember, in accounting, there was about 60 of us that graduated in accounting and each of us was given three accounting firms. They were the ones that we were to concentrate on, trying to get employment. You didn't move over and take this fellow's ones. You had one large size accounting firm, like Arthur Andersen, and a medium size and a smaller ones. But, you kept to your own, you tried to get your jobs through the ones they gave. But they were not represented at the campus at all, in recruiting, like they do now. None of the other banks or industry, because they didn't need them, they had all the help they needed. When I graduated, I went two years before I got a job in accounting. In fact, I peddled hand bills from door-to-door for a good part of that time, in the suburbs around Elgin. You'd get \$5 to deliver them, a couple thousands of those hand bills. And, they're come out, you know, periodic sales, so it wasn't anything that was dependable, but it kept you in a little spending money. But—

ES: And other students were in the same boat? They weren't successful in getting jobs?

RB: No. You were very lucky if you walked away at graduation with a job.

ES: This was in 1931?

RB: Uh-huh.

ES: Do you remember any of your professors? Did you have a favorite professor?

RB: Oh yeah. When I went, the ones I remember probably the most are the ones in accounting. There was a Professor Schlatter who taught Cost Accounting. Then there was a Professor Filbey who taught the auditing. Then Professor Morey, who was Treasurer of the University, but he taught Governmental Accounting. The background of those three was probably the most valuable of all the faculty that we had. I can remember Professor Schlatter, because, you know, at that time when we went to classes we were dressed up. We might have worn a sweater, but you were dressed with a tie and so on. There was nothing like a sport coat and jacket and trousers. One morning he showed up to class and he looked down. He had a suit jacket on and the trousers didn't match. He had lost a very good friend who had passed away during the night, and that had upset him, and that got him upset with us because here he was in front of us, you know, dressed like that. He didn't have a matching suit on, he was really upset about this, nervous about it. He apologized profusely, throughout the morning classes as to why he was attired that way. I think now about how the professors probably show up with sport jackets and sweaters and what not, but at that time. You came dressed for business.

ES: Was that throughout the campus? Or was that the business students who were all dressed up?

RB: No, that was throughout the campus.

ES: Oh, everybody dressed up.

RB: And of course there was no smoking on campus, so you knew when you were off campus because there were cigarette butts all around, outlining the edge of it.

ES: Did people smoke off campus then? Students did smoke.

RB: Off campus you could smoke, but you couldn't smoke on campus. So you'd come to this spot and that would be the end of it. If you were able to take a 10 minute break and were within classroom proximity, they'd all rush to the curb, you know. Then one of the big cigarette companies, I forget what, it was Old Gold, sent out to all the students, we got a nice tin box, about 100 in there, in U of I colors, well it wasn't engraved, but it was imprinted, you know as the University and all that. All the mothers that were down there got up in arms for the tobacco industry for sending these cigarette gifts to all the students. So there was a feeling even back then about smoking.

ES: Was it pretty prevalent? Did most students smoke?

RB: I don't think as much as today. The rooming house that I stayed in, I don't think any of us smoked. A couple of them chewed I think, but [laughter] but I don't think any of us smoked at that time.

ES: How big were your classes and where were they held? Where were you concentrated mainly?

RB: Well, most of the commerce classes were in the Commerce Building there. And, I would say there was about 15 to 20 in a class. Of course the lectures they would combine, you know, so you'd have 75-100 in a lecture class. Most of the instructors were working on their graduate degree, except for the three that I mentioned, they were tops. They were nationally known, they had written textbooks and delivered papers and so on. They were well known.

ES: Were students close to faculty? Did they interact socially at all or—?

RB: No, no. I think it was kind of a hands off deal. Although they were friendly to you and an advisory.

ES: So you didn't go over to their homes for dinner?

RB: No. They probably couldn't afford to feed us.

ES: What did you hope to do with your major when you graduated?

RB: Well, of course, at that time, when you were studying accounting you were thinking of always getting a CPA degree and going into a public accounting firm. Looking back I'm glad I didn't. I finally wound up after a few years with the Sinclair Oil Company in their central division. I can remember when I was the only college graduate, I think, in that office. I can remember the chief accountant when I showed up for work, he says, "Don't try to change everything [*laughter*]." So I was there about nine years. We were pretty well disciplined because this was a district office, everything back then was done out of New York and everything had a timetable and you met those deadlines or else. It was good background training, because I could see later on I left there in 1942 and went to United Airlines. And, United Airlines at that time, in the accounting department, was kind of [*cough*], "If we don't get it done today, it will be there tomorrow." I didn't come from that kind of training and background, so it made quite a change. Then going with United, they had just started their military contracts and they were hiring to fill people in that activity, and I wound up in a few months as head of that group because the fellow that had been head of that had gone in one morning to talk to the chief accountant about something that was happening. He didn't have access to some records, and so he spouted off and said that the job was worth a lot more than they were paying him, and this and that, and he up and quit. So the next thing I knew, well they offered me the job and gave me the raise that he probably deserved because he had brought it to their attention that things were different. And, that job gave me a lot of exposure to operating departments in United Airlines. Some of those early pioneers, it was just a good opportunity.

ES: Is that where you stayed?

RB: I stayed there until the end of the War. Meanwhile, Mr. Patterson, President, felt business oriented staff should be in the Operating Division and I was selected.

ES: I wonder about the Stock Market crash in 1929. Now you were in school then, what was the reaction on campus?

RB: I was in school. I don't recall that. I can remember seeing the headlines in the paper and that. Of course I didn't have any stock, or our family didn't. You'd hear stories of relatives who were not that close to us who had lost everything, you know, and what had gone on. But really that didn't affect us too much, we didn't have much, we didn't have anything to lose.

ES: Did you talk about it in class? Do you remember discussing it?

RB: Not too much. I think, the one who had been some of those economic professors didn't talk to us. But they had one who was world-wide known, Professor Ivan Wright and he would touch upon it in his lectures, which would be twice a week. But to many of us, who were, you know, not directly affected by it—

ES: So you didn't notice it much—

RB: You didn't notice it much until you went to try to get a job. That's when you'd notice the effect that it was having.

ES: So that would have been your junior year, 1929-1930. What was your Senior year like? Was that financially tight? More so than before?

RB: I don't think there was too much of a swing between them. The cost of going to the University had been pretty stable, \$25 a semester, what we were paying for room and board was just about the same. I don't recall ever getting an increase in it. Of course entertainment became a little more available, talking movies came in you know, we'd go down to the theater. But, every place we went we walked. We walked from the campus to downtown Champaign or downtown Urbana.

ES: What was your impression of Champaign-Urbana when you came down, as compared to Elgin?

RB: Well—

ES: Was that a hard transition?

RB: They were about the same size. They had, I think they had more retail than Elgin had at the time, because they were trying to get more students and that. There was more retail downtown Champaign than there was on the campus. There was very few stores on the campus other than the confectionery stores, drug stores and bookstores and that.

ES: Was there a pretty good relationship between the U of I and the town?

RB: Yeah I think so. They were far enough removed that I don't think there was trouble. I don't think any, every once and a while there would be an uproar between the students. And our kids, compared to later years, we were pretty quiet individuals.

ES: You talked a little bit about social life, but I wanted to ask you, I've asked you where you lived, and why did you chose that place? Was it just available, the boarding house you lived in?

RB: Well, I think one thing was the size of it. It was a well built place, brick, and the way it was laid out seemed to be, after that first year, it more seemed like home. In fact, my roommate after that first year was the son of the people that operated it. So, he had all his living right then and there. We never went down and got into their area at all. It was strictly a rooming place.

ES: What did you do for fun? What kinds of things did you do for fun in your spare time? How did you entertain yourself? Did you go to the sporting events on campus?

RB: Oh yeah! Football and basketball were the prime ().

ES: Did you know Red Grange?

RB: We knew him from Wheaton, he was older than I was. Some of our relatives had been through school with him. His dad was the Wheaton police chief, and so my dad, through his position, got to know him pretty well. And he, there was a lot of history about Red Grange, because, he was the first guy to come out, you know, and make a big name for himself in the pro-league. And coming to the University he had worked his way through, to get into the University by carrying ice in the summer time. They didn't have big electric refrigerators, you had big blocks of ice. He was the delivery guy for, for that's why they called him the "ice-man" and then they played that up all during his time. And of course, Elgin sent a number of good athletes to the University too. Doug Mills wound up as the Athletic Director and then got ousted out, there was a season of bad records and the pressure that the Alumni put on him to do something about it and all the pressures and he went out. He was an idol for a lot of us that knew him personally. The athletes at that time were, I think, more of a mixture with the students.

ES: Really? You'd see them in class and at the hang-outs? Then you attended the basketball games? Were they in, where were they held?

RB: Oh basketball was a big thing at the University. They had good basketball teams at that time. I might also say, you've heard of Chief Illiniwek. I backed him up, the first one they had, I was a backup for him.

ES: Was that right?

RB: Uh-huh.

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ES: You were talking about Chief Illiniwek. You were the second, second in command there?

RB: No, when he wasn't able to show up for games and so, then I would act for him. I had been active in the Boy Scouts all through my younger life and had taken an interest in Indian lore. I had my own costume and, so did he. It was right after, he left, that one of the Champaign retailers, Joseph Kuhn, financed the purchase of an Indian costume, for the Chief. But the first ones we had our own, from our own collections.

ES: How did that come about? How did they decide to have a Chief Illiniwek?

RB: Well as I recall, this Leutwiler, who was ahead of me a year, had gone to the marching band director and had suggested that they needed something to kind of supplement the drum major. He made a presentation and this guy [Ray Dvorak] picked it up and worked it into the program.

ES: And how did you get the position?

RB: Well, because I talked to him and I said I was about the only other one who had a costume and a background in it. So I went and tried out and filled in, when maybe there would be examinations that maybe conflicted with his appearance.

ES: Did you do it a number of times?

RB: No, I think I was up to Northwestern and probably once at the campus. Because he was a pretty healthy guy [*laughter*]. When we had the, the Illinois Foundation out here this summer and they had a party over here at the Cherry Hills Country Club. They introduced the fellow who had been the third one, he was there. And I remember when I was a freshman and I had done some work with the YMCA, they had an organization called Friendly Indians, and with the kids at the various grade schools. And, I used to put on the costume and go over to the grade school in Urbana. And this fellow now, later, that lapse of time, had become a Chief. And, I was talking to him about all this hub-bub that they've been having about the Chief and this and that, I felt him out, because I felt that those of us who were doing it, originally, were serious, we wanted to be authentic. In fact I had learned how to do some of the dances from the real Indians. And so, it finally got away from that to be more gymnastics. And I think that's when it finally got to, some of the feelings of the real Indians, of what they were trying to represent. I asked this fellow, if he had the same feeling, and he said, "That's right." It got to be more of an acrobatic, gymnastic demonstration, rather than the authentic appearance that we tried to depict.

ES: How did you learn the dance? Were there, were people in town that could show you how? Or did you learn through the Boy Scouts?

RB: Through the Boy Scouts and the fellow who was a Chief Executive in Elgin had done this for many years and had quite a collection, and he picked up four of us to be an original group, and from that it built up into another. Let me show you some pictures here for a minute.

[Tape recorder stopped and restarted.]

RB: At it's inception we tried to be more authentic and truer to the background of that than the ones that came on later. They used it more of a promotion than, it was--

ES: How did the students feel about Chief Illiniwek in the 20s?

RB: Oh I think that this was the big thing for them. For him to come out.

ES: Was this done at the basketball games as well?

RB: No. Basketball came on later. It was, it was just football. It was when it later came on more, I would say in the 40s or maybe 50s before they did basketball. Then they got to use him at alumni meetings throughout the state and so more promotion. I think that's when the real

Indians began to take offense. Then there got to be caricatures about them and all. I think that built up that hatred. I don't know if hatred is the right word, but feeling against it.

ES: So, what else did you do? Did you go to dances? What did students do for fun?

RB: Well they had, they always had, I would say, seven or eight dances a year. They'd have a Military Ball, and of course, a Senior Ball and a Junior Ball, Arts Ball and some of the promotions like that. I don't know if they still do now but one of the big things at those dances was the Grand March. Do they do that anymore?

ES: I don't think so.

RB: Beside the regular dances, when they'd have some of the big name orchestras playing, then they would have a Grand March. And you, with your date, you'd come aisle one, and then they'd go around the outside, and then they'd just come down two, you'd finally wind up with the whole ballroom shoulder to shoulder with it. That was really about the end of the dance, wasn't it, when they had that?

Mrs. Bartlett: [*Sitting near by*] Uh-huh yeah.

RB: But at that time that was dances. There was very little refreshments--

ES: Were they affordable? Could you, people could go?

RB: Oh yeah. I would say, \$5 range probably. And, some of the big name bands.

ES: And they were held in some of the different places on campus?

RB: Oh, usually was held in the gym, wasn't it?

Mrs. Bartlett: What ever they used for the ballroom there. With the big attendance.

RB: I think so. There'd be big turnouts for this and I think it was primarily on the gym floors.

ES: Was there places on campus you would go to meet people? Where were some of the hangouts that students would go to?

RB: Oh, probably be the confectionery place like Prehn's and, and I forgot the names of a couple of the other places. But that was the primarily hang out. Of course, what little facilities that they had at the Illinois Union. . . .

ES: Now was that in University Hall?

RB: No, as I recall it was just South of Green Street on Wright. There was a bank on the corner and you went, there was a combination of the Union Building and the YMCA, I think they

shared it. The facilities weren't much, and there programs weren't that much until they built that new one.

ES: What activities were you involved in? Were you in the YMCA?

RB: The first couple of years I was, and then I got busy with studies, and--

ES: What kinds of things did that group do?

RB: Most of those used to, volunteer to do work with the public school system with these younger kids.

ES: What was Homecoming like? Was that a big, a big deal?

RB: That was a big, a lot of house decorations and parades, student vaudeville activity. But I think that the house decorations were the big thing.

ES: And that continued even after the Stock Market Crash and the Depression set in?

RB: Oh, uh-huh.

ES: Did the depression affect student activities much in 1930 and 31? Were things scaled down? Did you see a noticeable change?

RB: No. In fact, at Homecoming, I think, was probably a bigger deal in the 30s than it had been, because bringing people back to share their experiences. If they had a job or didn't have a job, or where they could lead them to. It was—

ES: I wanted to ask you about the fraternity system and what it's role on campus was. Did the independents and the Greek students get along or how did that—?

RB: Well, they got along but I think that the fraternities and the sororities were in the driver's seat. And, I don't think there was as much independence as there is now.

ES: Were you in a fraternity at all?

RB: No, no.

ES: Why did you choose not to do that?

RB: Well, at that time, it was probably money. Although the difference probably wasn't that great, but it was enough to make a difference. And, of course the University was growing and they were always looking for additional finances for a new house. There was a lot of competition among fraternities, you know, the facilities they offered, the programs they offered. And, if they'd get a new house, why, it would be a big attraction.

ES: Was there mingling between the two groups? Between the independents and the--?

RB: No, no. The independents were in the minority.

ES: Did they socialize together?

RB: I would think only at like these dances that they had, but only at those. But otherwise, I doubt if there was—. Now with the athletes, there probably was a more, little more mergece other than the general mill of the students.

ES: What was the student body like, as far as different racial groups and religious groups? Was there much diversity among the population?

RB: No, it was predominantly Caucasian. Probably the African-Americans were probably second. They lived to the North of the campus. We were at 6th and Stoughton, they had to be further North another half mile, more or so. Just pushed up, there would be a dividing line between Champaign and Urbana, there would be a little in both, but they were not too close geographically to the University.

ES: Why was that?

RB: I would imagine it was because of the, the private housing probably didn't accept them. Then there was the beginning of the Asiatic students come in. And, it was probably after the War, after the Second War, that there was more of an acceptance of them.

ES: Did you notice discrimination on campus at all?

RB: No. I don't think, you'd have to search for it, it was there, but it was not flaunted at them or anything. It was—

ES: But the African-American socialized...?

RB: Kept to themselves.

ES: ...to themselves. What about the Jewish students? Was there any feeling--?

RB: Well, they I think they pretty well mingled with the fraternity group. They had two or three houses of their own. The ones that were independent, I would say, they were in the minority. I think it was after, probably after World War II, that you got to see more of the, working together of the—. You've seen Medicare 7, 8, or 9.

ES: Oh yeah.

RB: One of their cassettes they indicate how they were formed. They showed up in the late 60s at the Union Building. It was one of these Friday afternoons. Do you know this story?

ES: No, no.

RB: Well, the renegades and what not would meet Friday afternoon after classes, you know, and take care of all the worlds affairs and that. Some members of the faculty recognized that there was a problem existing there. They wound up with all their instruments in this room in the Union Building where this group met every Friday. So the students said, "Who are you? What are you doing here? This is our territory!" And one of the professors, who participated said, "We are here to teach you how to get along and communicate with music." So they played this jazz concert that afternoon. So then they come back the next Friday, it kept building from there on, they never knew how many people would be there; that's how they got 7, 8 or 9, because they never knew if they would have seven people, or nine people, or what. And, it was at that program that kind of brought the people together and kind of start--, stopped some of the hard feelings between the radical groups and the University. The original group was primarily the professors or the students working towards their professorships and what not.

ES: Yeah, one of the members of that group, Stan Rahn, volunteers in the Archives.

RB: Yeah, I have a number of their recordings that I think he does a lot of their announcing. Of course, then they got active during the spring breaks going around to the alumni groups, to Arizona and the warmer climates and what not.

ES: Yeah, I can understand that.

RB: But their original purpose was to bridge the gap between the ones who were getting a little radical minded.

ES: But in the 30s you didn't see that overtly?

RB: No, no, no. That all came later. In fact, that was in the late 60s.

ES: You've talked about rules a little bit, but I wanted to ask about that again. I know Prohibition was on during this time. Did students drink?

RB: Yeah, they had access to where to go to get it.

ES: How did that work out?

RB: Oh, there was some, I don't think it's as prevalent as it is today, because, you'd see in the daily newspaper that Joe Blow was dismissed for conduct prejudicial to the interests to University [*laughter*]. You could figure out then that he was caught with drinking or something.

ES: Was that grounds for dismissal?

RB: Uh-huh.

ES: You said you couldn't have cars on campus?

RB: We had one fellow that lived in this house where he did. He came down as a freshman, he had a motorcycle, so he went to the University and asked, "Can I have permission to have a motorcycle?" I guess who was ever running the program at the time figured he couldn't do much trouble with a motorcycle, so he gave him the motorcycle license. No sooner than he got it, he went and got himself a Ford, and put the license on the Ford. But, people to go to Chicago always rode the Illinois Central.

ES: Is that how you got back and forth?

RB: Oh, once and a while we'd rent a car. I can remember the group from Elgin, our hometown, rented a car. And, the fellow said, "Now, you can only have five in the car." "Well, five would cost so much money, could we have a couple more?" So we took a couple more. We put, tied most of the luggage on outside, and sure enough, I went with them and they lost my luggage, it fell off the car between Urbana and Rantoul. When we noticed it we tried to retrace to see if we could find it, talked to some people back that way in some farmhouses if it had been picked up or anything. And sure enough the guy who rented these cars was watching all these car rentals going North towards Chicago and seen it, and so he thought, that's (), what's this () doing coming back and he waved us down and two of us got down on our hands and knees in the back seat with stuff draped over us, so he couldn't see how many [laughter]. The people we had, explained we were looking for a suitcase that fell off. These were private individuals that had cars, they weren't like Hertz or anything.

ES: Oh I see.

RB: But most people went back and forth on the Illinois Central.

ES: What about during the week, did you ever get off campus and go other places? Or where you pretty restricted to—?

RB: You weren't restricted, you just didn't have a way to do it.

ES: Way to do it.

RB: You didn't have a car.

ES: Did people go home very often?

RB: I think the ones from Chicago did. Talking about the cars, there was one fellow who had lived with us, he had always had a car. He come from a fairly wealthy family in Chicago. So when he got down on the campus and no cars, he was just berserk. He would call a cab to go down to Champaign and he'd tip the driver to move over and let him get behind the wheel and drive the car. He was this obsessed that he had to have the experience of driving the car.

ES: Do you remember the Dean of Men during this time?

RB: Thomas Arkle Clark? Yep.

ES: Did you have any experiences with him?

RB: My only experience with him, at that time, when we sent out our dry cleaning, delivery constituted bringing it to the entry to your building, foyer, hanging it there. They lost a suit on me, and they figured, "We left it, we delivered it to your house." Now there were two houses that were just about alike, just built it in reverse, with a little ally-driveway between them. And so they said, "Maybe we put it in the wrong house." So they went over there and couldn't find it. Anyway, a suit of clothes at that time was probably \$20 and that was a lot of money to have, so I went to see Thomas Arkle Clark to see what the University would do with this dry cleaner. And so he made a phone call or two and the next thing you knew I had \$25 to buy a new suit [laughter]. That was my only experience with him. But he was well liked—

ES: Was he? I was going to ask how the students viewed him.

RB: Yep, yep.

ES: Was he pretty visible among the student body?

RB: Yeah, he was, he had a mustache, he was kind of short, stinky, grey haired. He was well accepted.

ES: Did students find him. . . his rules strict? Did they feel over-regulated at all?

RB: I don't think so.

ES: They were pretty accepting of the restrictions?

RB: I think we were pretty used to it, coming from our homes and what not, we were pretty well, he rules, home rules, and if he was and that if he said it-- and if you got in trouble, why he disciplined you, that was fair. And of course he had student assistants who would investigate some of the charges going on, so he had a pretty good rapport with the students.

ES: Do you remember the Dean of Women, Maria Leonard, at all?

RB: No, no.

ES: Was there a difference in women's rules verses the men's rules?

RB: No, no, no.

ES: Let's see.

RB: If there were rules, I think we accepted them because we were raised that way.

ES: Did you have curfew rules? Did you have a curfew in your house?

RB: No.

ES: Did you notice a change in the four years that you were at the U of I? From 26 - 31, or 27 - 31? Any difference in the rules that were there?

RB: No, I think that was a pretty stable period, including the faculty . . .

ES: What was your opinion of the President? Did you have much contact?

RB: Do what?

ES: What was your opinion on the President? Or did you have much contact?

RB: We had no contact with him. I think it was Dr. Henry at the time, David Henry. I think he tried to communicate with his students with a daily publication and, and what not, but he was kind of behind the scenes. Well, the Dean of the Universities, Dean of the Colleges, they were more seen with the Students.

ES: Who was the Dean of your—?

RB: Thompson. He was a big, heavy set man, made a good football player. He would sit in and prompt some of the class discussions and what not, he knew what was going on.

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

ES: I wanted to touch on what was going on nationally and how aware you were of the President of the United States and activities that were going on, in the country at the time.

RB: Of course at the time, probably nationally, the biggest thing was Al Smith running for president, he was the first Catholic, you know, to run for the presidency. That was made quite an issue among the people at that time, whether America was ready to have a Catholic president. Outside of that, and the Depression, but the Depression didn't seem to be as close to us on a daily basis, while we were aware of family members who had suffered, you know, lost their jobs.

ES: You didn't see students leaving the University because of finances?

RB: Yeah, but I don't think in droves.

ES: Were there political groups on campus? Were students involved in political--?

RB: Yeah, there was, they were primarily the independents and they were usually from the Chicago area, and they were pretty active, that group. Many of them later on became pretty highly political appointees of some kind.

ES: Did they hold rallies or campaigns? Did you see people on the Quad passing out political literature?

RB: Not too much. They had kind of a passive approach to, because they were in the minority.

ES: What was the political tone on campus? Were people Democrats or Republicans?

RB: Oh, I think it was predominately Republican. Oh, I don't think anyone ever polled them. They don't have polls as we now visualize them. But there was enough diversity, you know, with the various schools, you had agriculture, and business, and law, and what not, so you had a pretty representative picture of what, who all people through out the state were.

ES: Did you have an impression of President Hoover? Did you like him?

RB: No [*laughter*]. Coming out, graduating, when he was still in office, and the way things were, trying to— You had, you had no programs, like Roosevelt, you know, had all these programs to get going people off welfare and onto the payroll and his WPA projects and civil conservation, and everything he promised. It was pretty attractive at that time because people were desperate.

ES: What did, oh go ahead.

RB: Because if you went out to look for a job, and I looked primarily in the Chicago area, and took maybe a day a week to ride in on the train or something, and visit--

ES: This was while you were in school?

RB: No, no, this was after graduation. You could see how things were. One of the public accounting firms that I visited, and I was on time for my appointment and I sat in the reception area and the door to his office was cracked so I could see him in there, I knew he was there, he had his feet up on the desk and whatnot, I think I waited for 20 or 30 minutes beyond the point in time. Finally he come out and brought me in, and he says (), "The only thing that keeps me in business is that I grade papers for a correspondence school." He had no commercial business at all, an international correspondence school, or whatever it was, he said, "I grade papers for its students." He said, "The best thing you can do is go home and read fairy stories for a couple of years [*laughter*]." So, looking for a job was not very encouraging.

ES: When did you start looking for a job? When in your senior year did you start looking?

RB: Probably in the second semester, February, March. I think most of that then was correspondence. Because now they have droves and droves of corporations coming down and setting up for weeks for interviewing, you know.

ES: Do you think your education help you, at all?

RB: Absolutely.

ES: What did it give you during that time— the U of I name?

RB: Oh, I don't know about during that time. I think that was just the conditions. But I think afterwards, Sinclair Oil it made little difference and then United Airlines, but the opportunities I had with United Airlines primarily came from having a good college education. There was a story about Sinclair, when I first showed up at work there I was assigned with an elderly gentleman who was a boyhood chum, in Missouri, of Harry Sinclair, so he had seen that this guy always had a job. When Harry would come to Chicago, maybe once a year, and he would come out to the central district offices, before he went upstairs and he met with the top guys of the organization at that time, he'd stop and spend a few minutes with George, his boyhood chum [laughter]. But anytime you wanted a raise, he was out of the country, he was always looking for oil someplace [laughter]. And he had to prove it, he ran a tight ship. They had come out at that time with cigarette lighter fluid, automatic. And, to promote sales, they used to have these little ounce or two samples. If a salesman wanted a dozen bottles to give to perspective customers and what not, he had to have the okay of Harry Sinclair to get a dozen bottles [laughter].

ES: I have another question about campus. I was wondering if you could describe what the campus looked like physically while you were there?

RB: What it looked like?

ES: Yeah. What were the boundaries of campus, back in the late 20s?

RB: Well the Engineering school was primarily North of Green Street and East of 6th. Wright, oh, two or three blocks over there, they were concentrated in there. In fact a number of very old buildings. Then the Commerce was out around 6th and Armory and that area. The Liberal Arts was along Wright Street between Green and 6th and the Library was in that same area.

ES: Do you remem—, no go on.

RB: Agriculture and chemistry were on the Urbana side of, I can't think of what street, just west of Wright and University Union Building. Then the next street, the First Street in Urbana, from that line up there, was primarily chemistry and agriculture. Then, or course, the farms out to the South. So that was kind of restrictive the campus activity, of teaching.

ES: And where were the boarding houses? Were they sprinkled around that area?

RB: There were every--, they were sprinkled around. The fraternities were primarily in the area where the Armory is, that area, just North of the Armory and West. And the sororities were over in the Urbana side. I don't think there were any sororities, well I guess there was a couple over there. But most of them were over on the Urbana side.

ES: Do you remember when the Alma Mater was dedicated? Do you remember that happening?

RB: No. I know where it is, but I don't recall—

ES: That was dedicated in 29, I didn't know if that was a big event.

RB: No, don't strike me as being a big thing.

ES: Was the Quad, what purpose did that serve? Were there students on the Quad a lot? Was that a center?

RB: No, that was just primarily a place to cut across and get from A to B.

ES: So you didn't see students out there studying on the grass, or—?

RB: Nope. Most of the students either did it in the college you were in, in their building, or you went to the library, the library was pretty active.

ES: Okay, so you graduated in 1931, do you remember commencement?

RB: Uh-huh.

ES: What that was like? Where did they hold commencement?

RB: In the Gymnasium, the men's gymnasium.

ES: Did your parents come—or your mother come?

RB: My mother and an aunt came.

ES: All the students were—?

RB: At that time all the students were--

ES: In your class? At the same time.

RB: At the same time. Uh-huh, uh-huh.

ES: And the President, did the President speak?

RB: Yeah.

ES: How do you, oh, go on. . . .

RB: I think, at that time there was in the Commerce school there was about 1,700 of us graduated, maybe that was the whole—No, I guess 1,700 must have been the whole student body that graduated, 17-, 1,800. So they were able to have it in a place like the gym, but when it got much larger they broke it up into schools I think.

ES: I see. Well, to finish up, how has your educational background influenced your life since graduating from the U of I?

RB: Oh, I don't know. I think I'm more cognizant of the differences in people and can accept things that, that are now that going on that maybe I wouldn't have 70 years ago.

ES: Have you stayed in touch with the University through the years?

RB: Oh, on a few of their affairs that they have. As I said, we haven't been back on the campus in probably in 10 years. I used to go back fairly regularly when we lived in the Chicago area. Now I was just thinking, many of the fellows that I went to school with are long gone. I'm just lucky I guess.

ES: Did you stay in touch with them after you graduated?

RB: For a while. And—

ES: Where, where did you meet your friends on campus? Were they also commerce people or—?

RB: Yeah, primarily commerce people.

ES: Is that how you met—?

RB: And the rooming house and boarding house. But I don't think any of those are alive now.

ES: I wanted to ask you too, how did you meet your wife?

RB: My memory just drew a blank. Let's see. I think one of the fellows in the boarding place got a date with her because the daughter of the lady that ran that boarding house was a working gal, she worked downtown Champaign, so she knew the girls who were working down there. So she got this chap a date. I think he come back and he was telling us all about it, and I said, I'm going to see if I can jump in there. So I followed up on it, so that was the a big story [*laughter*], got a date with her, I guess we had two or three, at that time, the social activity was either going

to the movie or they had a roof garden dancing at one of the retail stores. What was the name of that store?

Mrs. Bartlett: Robeson's.

RB: Yeah, at Robeson's.

Mrs. Bartlett: And then the Sunday recitals. We used to go to that organ recitals that they had on the campus too. I don't know the building but I wanted to go and we went quite often and Sunday afternoons.

ES: So you were from Champaign – Urbana [to Mrs. Bartlett]?

Mrs. Bartlett: I was a working gal down there. Worked for a printing company.

RB: But we've been married for 66 years.

ES: Well thank you for speaking to me. Do you have anything else you'd like to say?

RB: Nope.

ES: Any other stories?

RB: No, except I still think it's the best University. It's a good school.

END OF INTERVIEW.