

**University of Illinois Student Life, 1928 - 38:
Oral History Project
Ruth (Kuhn) Youngerman - '35
Champaign, Illinois
October 22, 2000**

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A

Ellen Swain: This is an oral history interview for the University of Illinois Archives. The interviewer is Ellen Swain. The narrator is Ruth Youngerman, an alumna from the class of 1935. We are at Mrs. Youngerman's home in Champaign, Illinois and the date is October 22, 2000.

Could you please state your full name and birth date for the record?

Ruth Youngerman: Yes, Ruth Josephine Kuhn, when I married I became Mrs. William M. Youngerman. My birth date July 17, 1914, here in Champaign, Illinois.

ES: I wondered if we could start off by talking about your family. I know they were here as late as the Civil War, as early as the Civil War.

RY: Right after the Civil War, yes. My grandfather came to the country in 1852, he had family in New York, and then he went to Woodville, Mississippi, where the Kuhns and the Lobes had intermarried in Germany for a couple of centuries back to the 16th or 17th century. And, he went to work for a gentleman by the name of Loeb in Woodville, Mississippi and he bought and sold cotton and then he started raising it. And then about that time the Civil War came along and his crops were burnt out and he enlisted in the 38th Calvary. We went to Woodville and checked on a lot of history of that time and half of the, half of the Calvary survived the Civil War down there, but half did not. And it wasn't necessarily from being wounded, it was malaria and small pox, which to me was very interesting. And of the regiment, I think my father, my grandfather, was the only one that came north. And he came, he must have come up, they had family in Kentucky and Indiana, and he stopped first in Indiana and opened a, a store, but it wasn't open very long and it burned. He went on, and I don't know why he happened to come to Champaign, except that part of the Loeb family was down South of Champaign, I think it was eventually of Tolono or Tuscola [one of the Loeb family was mayor]. But anyhow, he came to Champaign in 1865 and farmers were exchanging grain at the crossroads and that's where he settled. And, my father born here in 1866, he was one of 7 children, and of the 7 children the only one that stayed in this area was my father, Isaac Kuhn. He became involved with his father, his father had a store, first it was Joseph Kuhn's, had several names: Empires, Star something, in the last century. Anyhow, my father eventually took it over, my grandfather retired in I think 1907 his wife died in Florida in 1906, and Joseph Kuhn died in December 1915.

ES: I see. And where was your mother from?

RY: And my mother was from Pennsylvania. She was born in Trenton, New Jersey. And her father was in some kind of business, I don't, I never knew what, but he went bankrupt and it was

the honor of the family that he paid off all his debtors. In those days you didn't declare bankruptcy, and file chapter, whatever it was. But that was the pride of the family that grandfather failed in business, but he repaid everybody. And then they moved to York, Pennsylvania, and I think he worked, he was a very good, I think he worked as a sign painter and as a salesman in some store. And my grandparents, my mother had an only sister, a child, a son, had been lost to her parents, and she grew up in York, Pennsylvania and played the organ at her church and taught school. She met my father when she went to Harrisburg, Pennsylvania to a first cousin's wedding, Rita Adler, my mother's maiden name was Adler. I think it's a pretty common German name. And, and she met my father who was the best man for his brother, Rudolph Kuhn was marrying Rita Adler, and that's where my parents met and they married in 1912, and came back to Champaign, and I was born here in 1914.

ES: I see. Do you have siblings?

RY: I have 2 half sisters, I did have, they were deceased now. My father was married first in, 1898, because he was born in 1866, and he married the first time in 1898. He and his wife went abroad on their first honeymoon, and my father revisited where his parents and his ancestors homes. His first wife died about 1901 or 2 and left him with two daughters and they were my half sisters. They lived in Springfield...well anyhow. And then I had another sister, younger than I, Helen Kuhn Wiese, who married a local boy, an attorney. Okay? Is that?

ES: Yes. And your family is Jewish?

RY: Yes, yeah, uh-huh.

ES: Tell me a little about that. What it was like to grow up Jewish in Champaign, Urbana.

RY: Well that's what always amazes me when people ask me that question, because, I didn't know, there was no difference. We went to Sunday school because we didn't have a real ordained rabbi, as they call it, we had a student that came from Hebrew Union College in Cincinnati, Ohio. He came on alternate weekends, and taught Sunday school, Sunday morning and right after Sunday school then they, Church service, same as everybody else. So we didn't know any different. We celebrated, we celebrated Christmas and Easter, and, I didn't really know too much about the Jewish, we lighted, I think have candles they light, that goes back about something about when the Temple burned in Israel. I don't know enough about it. I think occasionally we lighted these candles in December, but Hanukah, that was it, and Christmas were sort of one in the same almost. We had a lady that lived with us and took care of us that was German Lutheran and so we always, celebrated Christmas really, more than any other Jewish holiday. And, so we really didn't, you know, eventually we had our temple, Sinai Temple was built about 1915 or 1916. My grandfather was buried from the Baptist Church, there was no Temple here in 1915. So, there was really no anti-semitism or different, we were really just the same as everybody else. So it's hard for me to understand, as I mentioned before, I think if my skin had been a different color and I had looked different, maybe it would have been. But we had no, we had no African-Americans in any of our classes growing up. My sister, in the first grade at Avenue School, which was on University Avenue then, it's now where one of the High Schools is, there was boy in her first grade class that was African-American, and

I remember when we had a party at my parents home, and he was invited, later he went on to win the Golden Gloves, which is some sort of fancy boxing thing, but we didn't, the only time I had any kind of contact with African-Americans in my physical ed. class at the University in swimming, we swam in the woman's building. You had to take P.E. in those days and there was this very nice lady, her name was Ruth, I can't remember a last name, she graduated and evidently became the principals of one of the local schools. But we didn't have, the people who helped in my parents home were usually not, it wasn't until after World War II that I think some of the African-Americans became helpers in the house at least our home. So that was growing up out here. Quite different.

ES: And where did you live?

RY: We lived, well, I was born at 304 W. Hill Street, right across from the Presbyterian's Church, I know all the, we knew all the Presbyterians and the Methodist, better than anybody else, because the church was right there. In fact, my first boyfriend was Robert Keck, he lived a block away, his father, I came across a letter from his father to my father, I forget what it was about, about some article that was written, but anyhow, it was one community, but we respected what other people were, of course we didn't know anything was that different. But anyhow, I forget what was the question, oh where I grew up. I grew up in 304 W. Hill Street, I was born there. Dr. Lindley was the doctor in town, he lived in Urbana, of course Champaign grew because of Illinois Central coming through, you know, Dan McCollum, who was our Mayor can tell you all the history. I was born at home, there were 7 people in the house and there was 7 things about me. I was born in the 7th month, the 17, I weighed 7 pounds, and what else. One of these things that would only happen in a small prairie town. I can't remember the other things, 7 people in the house. But you weren't born in the hospitals in those days. I don't think there was a hospital here, 1914. I don't think so. So anyhow. But we knew anybody in the area.

ES: I know you said you went to High School here in town?

RY: Yes. The freshman year, some of us who were going East to college, our families had discovered, or probably felt that we'd be better prepared, they had college boards in those days, college boards in those days lasted 3 days. So they sent us away to preparatory school, I happened to end up in Chicago at the University School for Girls, Miss, on Lake Shore Drive where all the fancy North Shore people went. It was a day school and then it had room for about 22 boarding students, we had suites that held about 2 girls each. But that was the Depression years, I went there in 1929, graduated in 32, and when I graduated there were only 12 in the class and Jane Addams gave the address. You know she had been down around the University of Chicago and Hull House where the people that were our faculty. But there were no laboratories in Miss Haire's schools, there was no chemistry or physics. I was saying I didn't take it when I went to college because my mother had blown up a laboratory. (*Laughter*) So anyhow. Ok.

ES: Do you remember the Stock Market Crash, of 1929?

RY: All I remember is that the head mistress had asked me into her office and she said, “Did you parents or anybody tell you anything, you know? Are you going to be able to stay in school?” And I said, “I don’t understand,” you know what she was talking about. And that was all I knew. But later on when I found out what my father paid in tuition why, I don’t know how we did it.

ES: But you were able to finish?

RY: Was able to finish.

ES: How did the Depression influence your college?

RY: Well I, I didn’t, a good many of my friends, not a good many, we only had small group of 5 or 6 that were going away to school. And of that group only 1 went away then, Elsie Mattis to Smith. Her husband later became a Congressman, Bill Springer, married Bill Springer. She was a bright girl, very nice. The rest of us went here to the University.

ES: You came back down from Chicago?

RY: Well, uh-huh, yeah uh-huh. So we went to the University and it was, it was, I had some wonderful instructors, and professors, and, but I don’t think I was geared for a large school. Anyhow, I did alright, I graduated.

ES: Where was your first choice?

RY: Vassar. That’s where I was going. And in those days if you didn’t get into the college or your choice you went to Connecticut, Connecticut College? You could get in there without, as I recall, without college boards.

ES: I see.

RY: Isn’t that funny? And there was really not too much difference, I don’t think. Very interesting.

ES: Now you grew up in Champaign-Urbana. Do you remember your earliest memory or association with the University before you were a student?

RY: I don’t remember, the only think we did was, in the old days there was the Star Course, concerts in the auditorium now known as Foellinger Auditorium. I don’t know whether it began, I always went to Star Course with my parents, it may have been after I graduated from college. But I do remember the Cleveland Symphony came here and they gave two concerts every year, one in the afternoon for school students, I don’t whether you paid or if the school paid, I don’t know, I just know I heard the Cleveland Symphony as a child and then they had a concert at night for those goers, and all I remember is my mother made us listen to Walter Damrosh, Philadelphia’s Symphony was over the radio in those days. That was classical music. We took

piano lessons and all that, but we didn't take, none of the people I knew took instrumental lessons, that's what I can't, you know now a days my children in the school system, they had music and they could take whatever, I ended up with clarinetist, flutist, cellists, everything. In those days, and of course I think most of it was that our mothers played the piano and that was the instrument. And of course with instruments you really had to have an orchestra or chamber group, did you not?, I don't know enough about it. I'm sorry, this thought just came, I didn't mean to disrupt.

ES: Oh that's okay. You talked a little bit about what circumstances which led you here, it was mainly the financial issues that brought you here to the U of I.

RY: Financial.

ES: Do you remember what your first day was like?

RY: First day...huh.

ES: Or your first impressions as a freshman coming back to school here.

RY: Isn't that terrible, no I don't remember. As I mentioned to you previously, I do remember in those days you could proficiency, and I proficiency out of, and you had to take Rhetoric, and I proficienced out of only Rhetoric I and I didn't proficiency out of Rhetoric II, one of my friends did. There was a certain set curriculum, and I forget how many hours you had to take in your major. And you had to take P.E., and I had one or two friends that got out of it, you know with doctors telling tell them they were--. I was trying to think of the other requirements. I went to Summer School 2 summers. We didn't go away during the Depression, we used to go up to Michigan. And, so I went to 2 Summer Schools and I finished in 3 years with the two Summer Schools. And of course there was no air conditioning, and I remember classes beginning at 7:30 in the morning in what was then, where the Illini Union is now, it was called, what did we call it, the University Hall?

ES: University Hall?

RY: University Hall. I remember wooden floors and we used to go in the basement and we survived, but it was hot. No fans.

ES: Where did you register? What was that like?

RY: Isn't that funny, I don't remember? But, for many years, before computers, you had to sign up, by certain letters of the alphabet and I don't think we did, I don't remember any pre-registration, I don't remember that at all. I don't know, we weren't exposed to that at boarding school, or course we weren't exposed to professions we were exposed to literature and music and art and stuff, we didn't. The idea of professions didn't enter our minds I don't think. Isn't that interesting I hadn't thought of that before? But then I did go on, my father did have a business

here and no sons, so I decided that I should be the one to get involved. My father was quite a bit older than, to be a father, he was 48 when I was born which was quite something in those days. I was the child of a second marriage. And so I felt a responsibility, he had built up a quite substantial business, he was called "The Man Who Made Main Street," he worked very hard with and in Forest Community. So I thought I should prepare myself for taking over, so I was afraid of accounting, and I don't know why I didn't take accounting, but I took Liberal Arts and majored in Economics, but I got a degree in Liberal Arts. And I remember working with Dean Thompson, he was a good friend of my fathers. I took a little seminar with him, I think there were 6 of us, I don't remember what we talked about. Then I had one with a man, of course, by a gentleman by the name of Allen. The one thing I still remember when you wrote a check you were supposed to write the amount of the check in as many places as possible. When you signed your name down at the bottom of the check you were supposed to put in figures, you know, the number of the amount of the check in longhand, and you know, in English, and then or course that place where you're supposed to put the figures. And then he taught us to put the figures down where we put our signature too. And that's about one of the few things I remember. And then I did take, and or course, advertising in those days, my goodness, I think it was under Journalism. The school, college, has since changed, I forget, did Sandage, Charles Sandage who established the Advertising school or, I can't remember? There was just the Commerce Department, and, but I took a Journalism class and as I mentioned I remember, the thing I remember learning about serif and sans serif type, so a few things stuck after 86 years. But it's different. I don't know how well I answered that. I forget.

ES: You did great. No. You mentioned that you entered economics because you wanted to help your father.

RY: Right, I wanted to take over his business.

ES: Were there many women in that department, weren't most men in--?

RY: I don't remember, isn't that terrible? It wasn't, I don't remember too many women, come to think about, I don't remember too many men either! I was sort of a waif. I remember Dean Thompson well, he lived up on the next block from us, anyhow. But he was a good friend of my father's. But I was trying to think, Allen, I remember. And, oh, I took a course, Prof. Liptman he was supposed to be a fine professor. I forget what, that was International, International something, economics. At certain periods of your life, you wish you would have related more. But I think it takes a lot of learning at different times you relate to different things more easily. I was trying to think what else, I didn't take any accounting. That was about it. I did, I went on to graduate school at Simmons College, in those days there were two places that women could go to get further training in business and there was one in Pittsburgh, but I chose the one in Boston, Simmons, had a school on Beacon Hill, I forget what it was called. But anyway.

ES: I see. And where were most of your classes? You talked about that you had classes in University Hall.

RY: Right, that was mostly, I think, English. Then the Commerce Building was where you took, you know, Commerce. Let's see I didn't have any class in, in Summer school once I had a, I think I had a class in the Natural History building, I know it was a building. I took a speech course, don't ask me why, I guess it was a course that one should take, I guess. And there was a, I'll never forget, this was humorous, there was football player in the class, anyhow, I gave a talk or speech and I was nervous, and when they wrote a critique on me afterwards his answer was, "You could have been a Hula dancer your skirt shook so." (*Laughter*) So they had a sense of humor in those days too, which always helps. But I was trying to think of other, but I did take a course in music and in art, I took of art, and I think that was at the, what was then called the, the Art or the Architecture Building, where the Architecture Library is now. And the music, I took a music course, and I think that was in Smith Music Hall. Music Appreciation, the courses were different in those days, I remember we spent the whole semester on Cesar Frank. But you know they, I don't understand it, but it is different emphasis. I don't understand, but it is different. Interesting.

ES: How did student and faculty interact?

RY: I think...

ES: Did you go over to their houses?

RY: No, I don't remember ever-- the only thing I did, I can't remember, I think in Geology I got a B+ and I wanted an A- so I could join, I could have become a member of an honorary society, Torch? Is that it or something? Yeah. And he said no. And later on my sister took the same course. No, that was that, that was that. Well anyway there were some interesting details. But I didn't make it, but I graduated and, you know, in good standing.

ES: I wanted to ask you too, what did the physical campus look like back in the early 1930's? Today, it's expanded quite a bit.

RY: Right, right. Well the, or course the, I was trying to think. The Presidents house back then, I remember when Chase was here, that was when I came home from boarding school. We knew the Chases'. That house then, the presidents house was on Nevada, about the second or third house from the corner. It's still there, it's a stucco, the outside is a stucco, and I don't remember [711 Florida] the inside. I was trying to think where the presidents house was. I forget when 711 was built. When the man who was, well, you have those facts and figures. See, what was the question? I'm sorry.

ES: Just what the physical--

RY: Oh the physical, yeah. Really it was bounded by, oh, I can give you a-- Back of the what we used to call the Auditorium, and I used to play tennis, we used to have tennis dates in those days. I used to play tennis back of the Auditorium and there was one or two clay courts and also the statue that Bob Chamberlain put at the entrance of the campus, on the corner of, on the corner

of Green and Wright, was back of the Auditorium. He did such a great thing to put the statue where you first come in. I think that's the most beautiful part of campus with the background of the old buildings. But that was the outskirts of the campus and we went a played tennis on the tennis courts on both sides of the stadium were paved with cement. When the stadium opened in, was it 1924 or 1926, my parents always had a lot of house guests, mother always had lunch ready for 30 or 40 people, in those days there was no place to eat out, unless you stopped at one of the little places around here and at one of the churches, you know. But to make a long story short, when Red Grange played at the opening of the stadium, and I don't remember, those sides weren't paved. Women lost their shoes in the mud. Mother had to distribute some of her shoes to friends, they didn't have any shoes to wear when they came out (*laughter*). But that's just little tidbits from the bygone. But that, or course in those day, the stadium was way off the limits. That was pretty much so. And south campus, the horticultural building - I wonder what ever happened to that building. It was a gray stone building with a pond in front with water lilies. That was south campus.

ES: Where was that?

RY: That was, it's just really, just beyond, really about a third, probably beyond Smith Music Hall, down from the Delta Gamma house and Smith Music Hall, in that area. But I can't visualize how far. Maybe, I don't know, maybe one forth of a mile down. And that was the perimeter of the campus. As far as the North campus. Illini, that was the baseball field [Illini Field], you know, where Beckman is. That was the only thing that was North campus. And the buildings that are there now, the men's gym, and that building next to it. I think once they had a Panhellenic dance there. And Huff Gym, in the 30s, was built, they had a Panhellenic ball there too. They had a lot of campus activities in those days. I imagine they don't have many these days, or do they? Panhellenic Ball, that was a big thing, and they'd get a famous orchestra for it, big deal. Sorry, misled you.

ES: No, that's great. You've answered a lot of my questions.

RY: Not very well. Possibly frivolously.

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

ES: Okay, can I ask you now about rules that were on campus when you were a student?

RY: Yes, I won't remember them exactly as rules, but they show what the rules were. Of course in those days parents had more influence, I think. At least how I was brought up, we tried to please our parents. But, to get down to the rules on campus. I thought first of cars, because now there are so many. In the 30s you could have a car only if you had a job and had to get to a job or you lived far from campus, like those local students that lived at home but went to school. There was no trouble with parking. I don't even know if faculty had cars in those days. It was a convenience, but it was also an expense. As far as rules, I think one of them was that you couldn't be found on South Campus after dark. That was a famous place for people to, what

shall we say, neck, we called it in those days, necking is what they called it. Whether they are back to those days now-- I don't remember very many bicycles which is interesting. As far as how we dressed, certainly quite differently from the way they dress today. I remember, nobody wore slacks in those days. We wore skirts, probably to class, blouses and sweaters. But we did dress for, it seems to me, there were a lot of nice parties at fraternities and sororities, and I remember particularly the Panhellenic Balls. One was held years ago on the old building next to the men's old gym, I think now it's called Kenney, I can't remember that building. It's still there, of course it serves another purpose there. And we had another Panhellenic ball in Huff Gym, and in those days they were big and we used to get famous bands for those, they were quite something, and we wore evening clothes and you know we got corsages, it was quite something. As far as, as alcohol, I think that, this is where most of us learned to drink really. At least most of us brought up on the prairie, there were of course a lot of students, in those days, there were quite a lot from Chicago, as now and there were even students from the East Coast, I don't remember how that happened, from the New York areas. But even they were not really much into alcohol. But anyway somewhere along the line I learned how to drink scotch straight - I don't know how that happened. I think we raided out, I think those of us who lived at home, would raid our parents medicinal liquor closets. Always kept for medicinal purposes only. I mention that only because I had a grandmother who died in Florida in 1906 and they sent for the local doctor, here I am straying, and Dr. Lindley went down and the first thing he did was give her a teaspoon of sherry, but it didn't restore her health, she died down there. But evidently, alcohol was considered. You know, you hear about people going west and they had teeth pulled or arms set and they drank hard liquor. Well that takes care of that, then one thing I might add, that was interesting, that colors the times really, Ogden Nash, who at that time was a famous humorous poet, I was trying to think of the woman who later on became, that was with the Algonquin group, but I can't think of her name. But Ogden Nash had a book signing affair at the local bookstore, which is now where Follett's was and now where the new building is, and one of the poems that I remember from his book, which fit exactly, was:

Men never make passes at girls that wear glasses.

And in those days things were so constructed that if a woman wore glasses she was considered a scholar and not to be played with I guess. Now a days they're all to be played with[laughter]. Let's see, did I want to bring in...I did mention about cars, and clothes and South Campus. And oh yes, we used to, there were two places on campus where you went between classes. That was Hadley's and Bidwell's. Bidwell's was down in the block just north of Green Street. Hadley's was in that red brick building, not the one on the corner of Wright and, what's that street right in back of Green Street, that's John. No on that, but the one next to that. I think it was like an arcade. I remember going to a dance upstairs, there was a ballroom. To get back to Hadley's and Bidwells's, that's where you went for Coke-Cola and to play bridge. That's where you entertained yourself between classes. I think that was, did I mention about the Tennis court in back of...did we do that?

ES: Yes.

RY: I did that. I forget what I said. Sorry.

ES: What did you wear when you played tennis? What were your sports uniforms?

RY: That was interesting. I had the first, I can't remember what we played in, but I can remember when I played in. My parents were out of town, there was some sort of tournament, and I used to wear, oh I know. It was like, it was one outfit, and it was like shorts, but it came to your knees, and then you wore a skirt over it when you went to the tennis court. And when you got on the tennis court you unwrapped your skirt and you played in that. I remember my, I think my parents were up in Michigan, this must have been towards the end of the 30s, had to be, it was before I was married, and my parents wired or called me, "Do not play in that tournament unless you wear the skirt," you know. But that was considered, you were pretty advanced if you wore that outfit. I remember it was made of, what do you call that, cotton, sort of waffled. Seersucker! It was made of seersucker, it was one piece and then you had this skirt that buttoned down the front and wrapped around and that's what you wore as you were going to play tennis and then when you got on the tennis court you could take the skirt off, my parents didn't want me to take the skirt off. I don't remember what I did. But that was, those were those times. I don't remember what the fellows wore.

ES: What about swimming? What were the bathing suits--

RY: I don't remember, I only. The only swimming, of course I used to swim at a local pool, and the only swimming I did on campus, or course we didn't have the big pools, you know, and women weren't allowed to swim in Huff Gym, that came, but that was later. Huff Gym, when did that come? I guess it was the 30s. No. I don't remember. Pardon me. Well, anyhow, but the only swimming I did was for my P.E. program and that was in the Women's Building, and that was the only pool that I know that existed for women at the time. I don't think the new women's gym over on, that's Goodwin, I don't remember is there a pool there? I was never in it. I don't think so. No. But women's sports then weren't, I played tennis and I played I don't think women played golf at the U of I. Oh, there was only a 9 hole golf course when I was growing up and that was that area now that's across from Mt. Hope, it's bound by, is that 4th street, yeah, that's where all the athletic stuff is now, that whole area. First it was Atkin's Tennis place, and then the place for the coaches, the head of athletics, and then the basketball practice thing, and that whole area was the 9-hole golf course. It was really something, you had to shoot a straight ball. I don't think, I may have played it once, you had to shoot a straight ball. There were no trees on it, if it didn't go straight you were in somebody else's fairway. It was really quite something. So, that was but there were, I don't remember too many, of course the campus wasn't that big in those days. I walked from the Commerce Building, or Smith Music Hall, or Lincoln Hall, we had classes in Lincoln Hall. It was primarily the Quad outside of the Commerce Building. See, Smith Music Hall, that was the only music building, so every thing was pretty much in that area. Of course, I wasn't in agriculture, and of course veterinary, I don't know where that was. I wonder when the School of Veterinary Medicine begin here, I don't remember it when I was growing up. I remember 20, 30 years ago, taking, when my children were grown, a lot of us used to take extension courses through the University, and they'd be

given in all these buildings that we never, that were new, Veterinary Building, was not new then, but that was really when I got into some of the other buildings, through extension work many years later. Sorry. Have you run out of tape, we're blinking, does that mean you're out?

ES: No, we're doing fine.

RY: Ok, sorry.

ES: I did want to ask you again, about rules. Did you have any dealings with the Dean of Women, Dean Maria Leonard at all, or have any impressions about her?

RY: No. I know she was very strict, I told you that one story. Somebody who worked in the Dean of Women's office, years later, said when she was, when Dean Maria Leonard was Dean, girls weren't supposed to wear patent leather shoes because the boys could see up their skirts then. I don't know how strict you can get (*laughter*). But that was, but I do remember you did, I forgot about that, no wonder I don't remember about my education. When I was a senior, that was my last semester, I was only here, that would have been my 6th semester, and I went to California with my parents for about 2 months and I went to see the Dean or somebody and I said, you know, "how can I do this?" And I forget, and he said, "If you want to go, you can go." I went and I graduated and I can't remember the reason I gave for wanting to go, I don't know if it was because my father was old or something, but I went to California, or about, at least 4 or 6 weeks my last semester in school. So there must have been some sort of rapore. No wonder I didn't learn too much (*laughter*). I don't know. I can't remember what the reason for that was, but my parents always usually went to Arizona or California, and I went in 35, that was the year I graduated and I went again in 37. That was, I was going to, eventually we were going to talk about the ethnicity--

ES: Right, we can talk about that now. Sure.

RY: I was just going to say, it was, the reason it came to mind was because this woman, well it's a long story, I'll just say that my father was involved with the Cosmopolitan Club from its early years, I don't know whether it was 1907 or not, I'd have to look at his obituaries and things, well we'll go over that later.

ES: Was he a student at the University?

RY: No, no, but he had a lot of friends on the faculty. But I don't know how he got involved. In the old days, because number one there wasn't much of anything in people, he may have been involved with in business that lived around the country would call so and so has a son or a daughter there, I think he is very sick, would you please see what you can do about it. Then he would have to call a doctor or call a, well anyhow, they were, there wasn't, the University wasn't set up to take care of everybody and everything like it is now. In those days you were far from home, if you were, because transportation was much slower in the 30s, cars, which didn't, and roads weren't that great, and trains didn't go that fast either. But to make a long story short,

there was no Dean of Foreign Students in those days and Allen Laing [College of Architecture and Engineering] and I can't think of the name of the other person who was very involved with the Cosmopolitan Club, and my father was very involved with it, and I have a, but as I was saying, when I went to school here in the 30s I don't remember any foreign students in any of my classes. As I was saying, the only African-American I remember on campus was this very nice lady, Ruth, that was in my swimming class. I do remember the fact that the Cosmopolitan Boys that came to my parents home about twice a year, they were from all over, but most of them, at least in the 20s, well, we're talking about the 30s I guess, but in the 20s I remember my father saying most of them came from South America, not even Central America, because their families were usually in the government and they could afford to send them here for an education. Most of them, I think, supposedly, and I could be wrong, came because the Agriculture School, and in the 20s when we were in California people used to tell us what a fine Architectural School we used to have here, and we did have some very famous architects who graduated from here. As I said, in the 30s, I don't, of course, those were Depression years, and I'm sure, I don't know how it affected student who came from different parts of the world. I don't really know. But my father, I have a book of letters that these students at the Cosmopolitan Club wrote him years after from Japan and the Philippines, and how they got here and what he did for them, I don't remember. My father was very interested in them. Years later when he heard that the *Readers Digest* was being translated into Hispanic, he ordered 50 subscriptions to be sent to South America or something, because he thought that, that there was, I meant it was a very, *Readers Digest* was always a very positive, bright, it took the top look at things rather than the bottom. It didn't scrounge around for the evil in man. Yeah, it was a very, at the time, it was a very helpful thing. But I don't know how, I can't remember what turned him on to the foreign students, but he was very involved with them.

ES: So you say you don't remember African-Americans particularly on campus at all? Do you remember discrimination of any kind: having to eat in separate places or--?

RY: I don't remember that at all. I don't think that there were enough here to make a difference. And I don't think they ever aspired to education, possibly. You know a lot of the, a lot of the, let's see how did they, they came up supposedly on the Illinois Central, though I belonged to the local Historical Society, they were just honored this last weekend here on campus, the Blacks, you know had a, African-Americans, didn't you see that? And I had, my father had talked about the Smith family and in the old days on the weekends, on Sundays, my father used to go out and visit farm families, and the Smith family, he told us, was the only African-American family and they have a separate dining room for the white friends. But in the paper, I didn't realize they had also gone to the University, which is interesting, now Dick Burwash will know more about them than I will because he was in farming. I called him to find out the name. But that was the only African-American family that any of us knew. And there was a lady now, and you should contact her, I don't know why I think of the people so late, Doris Hoskins, who's the new President of the Champaign County Historical Society this year, and she grew up here and she's 89, I think, or something, wonderful lady. She could probably be very informative about that, see I just met her within the year. But she could tell you a lot more, that's all that I can really add about ethnicity and so forth.

ES: You said that you never felt discrimination when you were growing up in town. Did you feel that at the University at all?

RY: Nope.

ES: No discrimination against you?

RY: I don't know how many Jewish people there were here then. There were some, there were a couple of faculty, that was interesting. There's another guy who's retired over at Clark Lindsey, Richman, is it Jack Richman? He, his father was, I don't know, I think was a craftsmen of some kind. He was on the staff of the University, he must be close to 80. He knew all the Jewish faculty members. Now, I knew a couple. My father knew Lipton, Lipman, L-I-P-M-A-N [*Simon Litman (1873-1948), UI professor of economics, 1908-1944*]. He was in Economics, I had taken his course. Then there was another man, oh darn, he gave me two of his books, well I'll have to give you it later, later. And that was, oh and Kohler, but he came later, he was in the German Department. And that was the only faculty that were around. And I'm sure during the 19th century, up to the early 20th century, there weren't any Jewish faculty here, but I could be wrong. But it would be interesting to check that and see. Isn't that funny, I'd have to look at the books to see that man's name? But that would have been about 3 faculty people, not very many. Then there was this man who was a good friend of my father, he wrote a book Our Modern Debt to Israel, my father helped have him, have it published, Our Modern Debt to Israel. Chancey Baldwin, he was a good friend of my father's. I have his book here, a couple of them. As I said, he was a biblical scholar in the English Department, very interesting, and I don't remember him too well. My father and him were good friends and they corresponded, and that was the interesting thing. This person wrote a history of Jewish life on the campus had wrote that Chancey Baldwin was responsible for the Hillel Foundation, which was inaccurate, my father was.

ES: Is that right?

RY: That was one of those things.

ES: How did your father, what was his role in bringing that?

RY: Well, there were occasionally Jewish students that would come to the campus and there was no contact, they had no, and evidently people would refer them to my father, and he had a meeting once of, I think, 2 faculty and a couple of students. I'd have to look at his autobiography, and that's how it became. He found over the years that there should be some center here for these Jewish students, the University wasn't supplying anything. It's not like today. Today any group that want's to can ask for a place, you do this for me, you do that for me, right? In the old days, there was none of this. People were, and of course, that's the way time are today, and I feel with the children too. Too much is supplied for them, you really appreciate things if you go out and do it for yourself. Anyhow, that's how it became, these Jewish students came and they didn't have proper manners and they didn't know how to

integrate. They had always been raised in, like cities, and of course when immigrants came to this country, not to, most of them came, you know, where there were others from their country, you know that's why there is the Polish in Chicago and the Jewish in New York, some of them, different parts of the country had different groups, some larger than others. And that's where they were comfortable, or course, and felt at home. I don't know, I don't know how, it may date back, here I am talking something I don't know about, but I wondered if it dates back to what your family was in, the country they came from. My grandfather's father had been a farmer, I think they had farmed and raised horses in Germany, and so maybe that, you know, somehow there's a twig or sprig or a seed, I don't know, whatever. I'm sure somebody knows a lot more about that. But that's what I just surmised at this point. But it's very interesting.

ES: Do you think most of the Jewish students came from Chicago?

RY: No, I think in, I don't know. That would be interesting to find out if they came from Chicago or New York. Wonder why they came from New York.

ES: When was the Hillel founded?

RY: In the 20s. 19, well they had a rabbi that came here as a student rabbi or something in 1924, I'd have to look. In fact that might be a good thing to find out from Hillel. See I'm not very, not very conversant or knowledgeable.

ES: Is that something you belonged to when you were a student?

RY: Nope. I don't know if they, well, and then did have a famous, in the 30s, he was very famous, he was very good, he later became President of Brandeis University, Dr. A. L. Sachar, S-A-C-H-A-R. And he, I remember, he gave classes in a room above Green Street, one of those stores. And he had a classroom, that was where the first Hillel was, and he gave a course on Comparative Religion, that was one of the first courses. He, I don't know whether you go, I guess you got credit for that. And it was after that the Catholics gave Comparative Religion courses, you know, and now of course they have a department in the University, which I'm sure they didn't have back then. Who was it that I played tennis with, Grace Schoedel, her husband was head of religion, I think he's retired now. But it would be interesting to find out when the department, I could be all wrong, but when the department of religion became the Department of Religion, and whether it started because these foundations were the beginnings. Interesting isn't it? But we had no, my father didn't have any really religious, he went to Cincinnati as a boy or 11 or 12, he was sent to Cincinnati because there were some Jewish people there, and he was called what we call confirmed, you know. And he was there for a year and he met some of the outstanding reform rabbis. This was the first reformed Jewish school for rabbis. Reformed Judaism came from Germany I think. Most of the people who come from the other parts of the world are either Conservative or Orthodox, there are 3 types of Judaism. So it's very interesting as I learn. As I get older I learn what I don't know. Where are we? Where did I, I digress all the time.

ES: No, no. Well I, the next thing I am interested in is social life. We have talked a little about that, with clothing and that type of thing. I want to ask you first where you lived when you were a student?

RY: Lived, when I was a student. I lived at 615 W. University.

ES: And that was your home?

RY: That was my home, my family moved, I was born, well, they moved there in 1920 when I was about 6 years old.

ES: I see. So then you were a commuter student for the first part of your career.

RY: Right, and I was a commuter. I lived at home, in those days you didn't have apartments. I was first married in 1938, I think we got the last apartment in town. Students lived in rooming houses or in dormitories or fraternities. You couldn't, when I was in school, that would be interesting, I forget what year they started when you were a senior at the university you could live in an apartment, you didn't have to live prescribed housing. Then as years went on, finally your junior year you could go out. Finally your sophomore year you have to go out. And now, I don't know, when you're a freshman do you have to live in a fraternity or a sorority or now?

ES: I think so.

RY: I think now just one year. But in the old days, not till you graduated could you. I don't know what the, there weren't as many graduate students in the old days, people went right to work. There wasn't as much to learn, not as much technology, engineering stuff. Very interesting, somebody could write an evolution, evolution of education. That's not the right word, but you know what I'm saying. The needs for, the different kind of education that one must acquire.

ES: So did you say that you drove then?

RY: Well, I walked the first semester, I walked. It was about a mile and a half, I thought nothing of it. Well, in boarding school we used to have to take long walks along Lake Michigan, always with a chaperon. Anyhow, I walked to school. Then my family got me, well that was 35, I guess we were getting out of the Depression to a point, and they got me a Model "T."

ES: That you drove to school and parked?

RY: Yeah, it was a small car. It was the kind you had to, I never knew how to crank it, but if you got into trouble you got somebody to crank it. I don't remember. In those days you never filled your own gasoline tank, I'm a pro now, I can fill anybody's tank, it's easy.

ES: Did you go out with your friends in your car?

RY: I guess we did. I remember after probably Senior Ball or something, we drove to Danville for breakfast. When you were a Senior that was off limits but that's what you did. You know, I'm sure they didn't have cars. Because none of them, I don't remember any of them working, it must have been my car. Maybe they drove home and got a parents car. But that was the only thing that I ever did out of bounds.

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

RY: There were a couple of girls, I think our parents knew each other, they came from Kansas or Missouri, and Elaine Lewis, a girl from the South. It was interesting, there were quite a few there were quite a few people from the South, Jewish boys and girls. Elaine Lewis, she came from Jackson, Mississippi, and there was a boy who came from Mississippi, and I can't remember his name or anything. I went with a boy who later became a Rhodes Scholar and now has Alzheimers, he came from St. Louis. They were from all over, but in that time in the 30s, see the University was old then, and education was more, not only more prevalent but more in demand I think. A good many of the students came from Chicago, I'd say in my generation. I was trying to think, and of course it depended upon the, what's his name, Khachaturian, he came from, where'd he come from, India. We used to be, his wife was one of the boys cello teachers, great guy. He came here in Engineering, took him 3 months to get to here. But that was later. Engineering was a, my father helped a lot of boys through school, which was interesting. I could tell you a lot of interesting things about people who went here, but that would be a different, different, I won't go into that.

ES: You mentioned that you lived at home and that you had a car and you drove to campus and then you said, what year did you join a sorority?

RY: I don't remember whether it was, whether it was I don't know why I joined it because I didn't spend much time there. Of course, I didn't live at the house, I knew these few people, Fritzie Tanner, now how did I remember her, she was in town a week a year or two ago. I think our families knew each other, I don't know how, but anyhow, she's the one who talked me into it.

ES: I see. What did that involve to join?

RY: I don't know. I don't remember, isn't that terrible? I was not that involved with it. When you don't live there--

ES: Did you have to pledge or--

RY: I guess so. But I don't remember, isn't that terrible. I never got that involved.

ES: I should say, that was Alpha Epsilon Phi.

RY: Was it Phi or Pi or Phi. Phi. P-H-I? Ok. It was a nice sorority, nice people. I don't know why I didn't, you had to live there really to get the, and I didn't take my meals there. I don't know why I didn't. Well I was involved in, the first year I was back, I don't know, I guess I was still involved in the group I had grown up with. Then we all sort of, well there weren't too many, well let's see Reggie went to the University and she became a Theta, and Elsie went to Smith, Jane-- a lot of the girls lived at home, a lot of the girls I knew. The Depression really was really--

ES: These were your friends from high school?

RY: Yeah. And Toddie Fraker, she never joined. Her family had hard times. Came from an old family in Urbana, and they had hard times. She never joined a sorority.

ES: How much did it cost? Was there an expense involved?

RY: I have no idea. I'm sure there was. I have no, not any, isn't that something, you think I would have thought about something, but I didn't? Isn't that terrible? I never, well.. Well, now a days, people are, it's a different world, in those days there wasn't much expected of us. I don't know.

ES: We talked, let's see—

RY: I'm sorry I'm so, you know. And now a days, of course, the kids have to know, my gosh. Well, I don't know. But I was brought up, my father was always, as I said he was 48 when I was born. It was like having a grandfather for a father, he was a wonderful man. But he was, they were both fairly strict. They had a lot of adages, that's you know, Victorian, mid-Victorian. He always said, "Any fool can spend money." If I'd ask for something I'd say, "I want this," and he'd say, "do you need it?" What was it, "a penny wise and a pound foolish," "from shirt sleeve to shirt sleeves in three generations." We weren't extravagant but we lived comfortably. But it was a different, a different world. We got to go to the theater and to music things. I didn't go, but my family, now some of my friends their families took them to football games when they were little kids. But I don't remember, they never took me to a, well my father was a golfer but he didn't, he didn't play football or basketball, he was working on a farm at that point. In those days, you know, you grew up in the 60s and 70s in Illinois, there were no, you didn't have that, you worked.

ES: Did you go to sporting events as a student?

RY: Yes. Went to, you know, football and basketball, and when I got married it was a big thing then because we didn't have that much going on here. We went to always the football and the basketball games, we didn't go to the baseball. But, my husband had played basketball in college so always, and football he enjoyed, he was like a, what do you call the guy who calls,

you know, calls the plays, a quarterback. He was my quarterback, I stopped going after when he left, when he died, because, you know, he'd call the plays. He's say now we're going to do this, and it was fun! You knew the game. As children we played touch-football, you the boys and girls. We grew up in a wonderful time, you know, front doors were always opened. But our parents knew one and other. If Mrs. Smith or Mrs. Fraker, whoever, said, you know, you have to be in at 6 o'clock or 7 o'clock, we were all, there was no question. Your group did the same thing and your parents did the same thing. Different ball game.

ES: I noticed too in the *Illio* you were on the Homecoming Committee? And the Mother's Day Committee, and the Day's Day Committee. No?

RY: I don't remember that, I don't remember that. I don't remember what I did. Evidently, I have no recollection of doing any of that. I wonder why they put me on. (*Laughter*) Because I worked at the *DI*? I don't know.

ES: Talk about that. How did that come about?

RY: Well I don't know. I don't remember. I guess I wanted to get prepared for advertising. I did take the 1 advertising course, that was in Journalism then I think. I can't remember who was the professor or anything. I learned all about how you lay out an ad and such and such and as I said all I remember is serf and san serf. I did some good ads, I won some prizes when I was working. I didn't work that long. I started working, when did I graduate, in 35? I guess in 36, and I was married in 38. I worked until we started having children, 1940, so not too long. Two or three years. It was very interesting. No, well, I went East to school, to Simmons College from 35, so I graduated in 35, from 35 I graduated from Simmons in 36, I didn't get a masters, I was having too much fun with the boys at school there. So I got a BS, I had a BA so I got a BS. That's too bad that I didn't do a Masters. I didn't. So I came back here in 36, in June of 36, so 36 and 37, 37, 38 I was married. So I only really worked a year and a half before I was married. Then I worked after I was married until I had children. And then after that, women didn't work.

You know, you had people who helped with people in the house, I was professional volunteer, you worked for every agency there ever was. It was interesting. It taught you a little about your community, not as much as I, well there weren't as many, you know, now they have Crisis Nursery, and Casa, and all these new organizations to help people, but in those days I worked what was then Service League, what later became Junior League, I quit then, it got too big. We had pre-natal clinic, you know, we'd pick up people, and take them, we had a clinic that worked part of the year in Burnham and part of the year in Mercy. We'd take these pregnant women, a big get up, little examination, they'd have no cars. We'd take them and take their children. I did, we didn't, I only had 1 car. I tell me friends on occasion, people I don't know too well, the old days we saw everybody because we only had 1 car and there were only 2 grocery stores. But now everybody has cars for every finger on their hand practically (*laughter*). We used to have to fumigate my mother's car, practically, after we got through taking these people. They weren't that bad, but they were different. We'd pick them up and take them and their children to Planned Parenthood. I didn't do any work with them until the 60s. I'd take these, there was a pre-natal clinic and a well-baby clinic, and we'd pick them up. In those days they couldn't afford doctors

or anything, we'd get a couple of doctors to volunteer. We started visiting nurse service, which you don't hear anything about these days because it's become something different, we started that through the American Cancer Society, I think, I forget. One thing leads to another, it's interesting. And now they, some of them have dissolve of course, it's very, very interesting. There was plenty of volunteer work to do. I forget all of them. Well, that's the way it went. But now, my gosh, in the mail, something for everything, isn't there. Well, that's good, it makes people aware.

And now of course, senior citizens, in the old day, you don't remember this, it was what they called the extended family, everybody was taken care of. My grandfather lived here on University Avenue, and, you know, a daughter would become widowed and she'd come home with her baby. And then when you became old you're family took care of you. But now, they're gone like that. Jack Roberts, I don't know if you ever knew him, weather man? On Channel 3?

ES: Oh yeah sure.

RY: He was a dear friend. And he said, he used to give homilies out here at the churches around here. One day a man came to him and said, "I don't know what to do?" It was after services and he came up to talk with Jack, he said, "I don't know what to do, I have I don't know how many thousand acres and my only son's left." You know, the grass is always greener. But there were a lot of farm children that stayed, it's interesting. We were doing all right. Yeah. Well what. Were not taping are we?

ES: We were.