

University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
World War II at Illinois Oral History Project
Stan Rankin
Champaign, Illinois
March 26, 2009

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE A (original interview is a digital file dubbed to cassette tape for transcribing purposes)

Chris D'Arpa: This is Chris D'Arpa. I am here in Champaign, Illinois and we think it's the 26th of March, 2009. I will double check that. I am speaking with Stan Rankin for the World War II oral history project. Stan grew up in Champaign and approached us at the Early American Museum in the Fall, I believe, when we did a presentation on this project. So Stan thank you so much for agreeing to be interviewed. This will provide a really unique perspective for this project.

Stan Rankin: Pleasure to do it for you.

CD: Thank you. The way I like to start all the oral history interviews is to have you in this case tell me your full name and a little bit about yourself. Where you grew up. Where you went to school. A little bit about your family. If you have siblings. What kind of work your parents did.

SR: Ok. I was born in Champaign, Illinois at Burnham Hospital November 23, 1934. Grew up in Champaign. Attended Champaign public schools. Grades one through three at Lincoln School. Four through six at Southside School and seventh, eighth, and ninth at Champaign Junior High School and ten, eleven, and twelve at Champaign Senior High School. From there I graduated in June of 1952, I went onto the University of Illinois and gained two degrees. One degree in accountancy and the other degree in management. Graduated mid term in January of 1957. After graduation I was offered a position in the government contracts office at the University of Illinois through a mutual friend I knew and took the exam and passed it. From there I worked thirty six and a half years at the University, retiring in 1992. At the University of Illinois I worked for approximately three years at the government contracts office where we expanded greatly the contracts, National Science Foundation and National Institutes of Health. And from there I worked at the physical plant directors office and we had the building program of the 1960s including the Assembly Hall and a lot of the residence halls, Comm West, Education Building, Plant Sciences. And I did the accounting and paid the builders for that. Physical plant at that time included divisions in Chicago, the operations maintenance division, the architects office, auxiliary services, which was Illini Union, Housing and Assembly Hall, campus planning office, campus landscaping, and some were housed in Chicago because at that time everything in Chicago was run out of Urbana until the Chancellor was appointed when the campus moved off of Navy Pier to Chicago Circle, now University of Illinois in Chicago. From there when the building program as over I went over to the department of computer science. And from there when I entered they were still operating the Iliac 2. And when I retired we

Rankin

3/26/2009

1

installed the first super computer on campus. I worked there for over twenty some years in charge of the accounting systems, the repair shop, and all remodeling we had to do for the various campus installations. And it was an enjoyable time on the campus. A lot of things happened during that time. A lot of good events happened irrespective of the student protests we had. That came and went. But I met a lot of interesting people in my work and I was very pleased to be on the campus at that time. So after thirty six and a half years I retired in July of 1992. And have very fond memories of the work we accomplished. I was always in the service area. I was never in the academics but support to the academics was just as important as the academics themselves. That's a little bit of it. As far as hobbies, I was in the Boy Scouting program and have been for over fifty years. I was a Scout Master for a good number of years. Over three hundred Eagle Scouts was another friend of mine. Did a lot of the national camps and I do a lot of work on the executive board and so forth. Currently my other hobby is railroading. I am completing my eighteenth year at the Illinois Railroading Museum and operate street cars in northern Illinois. I Also work at Monticello at the railroad museum there as a car host. The biggest thing I did during my lifetime was work on fifteen Model T Fords restoring eleven of them and building from scratch four of them plus two Model A Fords. Other than that I've had a lot of other activities I've been in the Rotary Club and still am in the Rotary Club. And various other organizations around town I have worked with. Kind of a thumbnail sketch but that's most of it.

CD: Ok. Can you tell me a little bit about your folks? Your family, whether you had any siblings.

SR: I've been single all my life. When I got out of the University I had a lot of serious physical problems, which resulted in multiple operations and so I never did marry. But I was an only child and so I have other than a couple of cousins that I could find I am in this world all alone. I don't have any family. I've been adopted, kind of, by two or three other families so I am never lost for that type of relationship. I work with them and watched their kids grow up. And I'm known as Uncle Stan to all of them.

CD: I think that's great. That's great.

SR: So anyway that's kind of a thumbnail sketch of my involvements. I don't have any children of any kind.

CD: Did both your parents work?

SR: Yes they did. Both of them worked. My dad was crippled until I was the age of nine and was crippled all his life but he could not hold a job. So he finally did start his own business on Seven Taylor Street, which is now currently a coin shop. But they rented safe deposit boxes there. There were twenty one hundred safe deposit boxes. So the three of us worked at that. We had to be on duty and let people in and out of the safe deposit boxes. He sold insurance with my grandfather and prepared many income tax forms and notary republic and that type of general thing. So in the summer time my mother didn't have to be down at the office too much. But

Rankin

anyway, after school we spent time, especially in the winter time, doing tax forms. So they were in business for quite some time. My dad and mother parted company after twenty three years. He went his way and my mother and I went the other way. So anyway, that was good, because by that time I was entering the University and it put the onus me to make my own future in the world. It was not going to be with him. So a lot of things turn out for the better and I think maybe that was it.

CD: Is Seven Taylor Street...in Champaign?

SR: Right.

CD: Right. Ok.

SR: There's a coin shop there now. In fact Taylor Street is closed off. It's a big kind of public eating area and so forth like that.

CD: Oh yes!

SR: It's one block south of Main Street.

CD: Right.

SR: And it goes from... Well, blocked off from Walnut to Neil Street.

CD: I know where it is now. I was trying to imagine it. So you worked as a kid growing up.

SR: Yes I worked as a kid growing up. I was doing income tax forms when I was eleven or twelve years old. And with the help of another person, an electrician, I wired a house when I was twelve years old. But I was always big for my age. We did a lot of farmers' tax returns. And farmers at that time did not keep books. There were no computers or anything like that. Most of them... We had a lot of farmers that had twelve spindles and they would spindle all the receipts for each month and bring them in a paper box and it was up to me to construct the whole year's worth of income and expenses for them. And I did this when I was twelve or thirteen years old. So I was exposed to the world of income tax. We had no 1040 short forms so everything was long forms. So we would take W-2 forms in and a lot of times it would be ten or eleven o'clock at night before we got home just typing the tax forms.

CD: Was there more than one typewriter in the shop?

SR: Oh yes.

CD: And what kinds of people used the safe deposit boxes?

Rankin

3/26/2009

3

SR: Well this goes back a little bit to World War II. It was kind of uncertain for a while about the safety of homes here in the Midwest. We never got invaded or bombed but the banks could not expand their lock boxes during World War II. It just was impossible to do anything. So this safe deposit vault was part of the old Citizen's State Bank, which went under in the Depression and never recovered. The front part of it was sold off as a shop but yet the big vault stayed there. So we rented safe deposit boxes and we had a lot of local people, Champaign Urbana and around, that came in. And their safe deposit box was the same as a bank but it just wasn't located in the bank. It was interesting to meet people. That's where I learned I could read signatures upside down. Still can. So when I became an election judge I never had to turn the application around. I can read signatures upside down and people would sign in and we had signature card down below the counter so I learned how to read signatures upside down at an early age.

CD: Do you remember any specific instances at the shop. Any funny stories to tell?

SR: No. It was fairly interesting. About the only time... We never had any excitement.

CD: No?

SR: Had a big fire on Main Street so we didn't open the vault that day but our building wasn't involved. But the big burglar alarm system... There's a big alarm out on Neil Street and a couple of times it shorted and started ringing and there was an old hotel across the street. So we had to take our ladder from home, put it up against the building and luckily there was a big stone ledge and we had to take five long bolts out of that thing with this gong going off in your ear to get to the wiring.

CD: Oh my goodness!

SR: And that took... We stuffed cotton in our ears and get up with a wrench and just start cranking the bolts out and it took about twenty minutes to get it shut off. So we called the repair person and they would come and take a look at it. But nothing much ever happened. The worst thing that ever happened, there was a tavern next door and still is and people sometimes would get sick all over our front door. But that was something... They had a janitor and we'd just notify him and he'd come over and clean it up.

CD: Oh that's nice. That was nice. So tell me a little bit about what life was like in town during the period of, maybe, 1940 to 1941 to the end of the war.

SR: Ok. The start of World War II was on a Sunday and there was talk on the radio that something had happened but it was unclear what it was. Well, it was the bombing of Pearl Harbor.

CD: And did you listen to the radio at home and at work? Did your folks...

Rankin

3/26/2009

4

SR: No we didn't have a radio in our office.

CD: Just at home.

SR: Just at home. And anyway we went to the Virginia theatre and I can't remember the movie but you could get in the matinee. If you got there before two you got a little reduced price.

CD: And I'm sorry, you went with your parents?

SR: No.

CD: Ok.

SR: Yes we just went to the movie and it was in December and the weather wasn't that good. So anyway just something to do.

CD: That's true.

SR: So we went to the movie and halfway through the movie the lights came on and the curtains went close and the manager came out and said, "If anybody has been in the military or is in the military you are instructed to leave now and go home and wait by the phone." Well we knew something had happened by that time, naturally. My dad of course being crippled was not affected. So they waited for everybody to leave and a lot of people got up and left with their wives and whatever it was and Chanute Field was not too big but there was some people in uniform. So then we got home. After the movie we found out Pearl Harbor had been bombed. And of course most people had no idea where Pearl Harbor was. And that started World War II. From then on it was not knowing the extent that we would be invaded and it was a lot of unknowns. Censorship was great and I still think today we have much going on that the general public shouldn't know about until the appropriate time. But that was the time we clued on. So that started part of the problem. Soon after that during the month of December there was hoarding. People went and they bought things. They bought up things.

CD: Where was the panic...

SR: There was a panic of, you know. If we are going to be bombed we are going need everything. And a lot of people bought things in kind of a panic situation that they didn't need.

CD: Was there a grocery store downtown at that point?

SR: Yes there were grocery stores all the way around. The biggest one was the A and P store and it was on Washington Street at the end of Hickory.

CD: Ok.

Rankin

3/26/2009

5

SR: And that was one of the bigger ones and Eisner stores were located around the different parts of the community. These were smaller stores but they were located there. Eisner store downtown was the corner of Randolph and Church on the northeast corner and just on the other end of the block from the new parking garage. That was a big Eisner store. So people tended to horde can goods and food and things like that.

CD: Did your family also stock up on things?

SR: I can't really remember that. I don't think we really did. They bought a few things ahead but it wasn't that great of a thing.

CD: So you were in the movie theater on Sunday and heard this announcement. How did people... You said that people left the theatre. Was there any sort of notice of surprise when the curtain drew closed? Or was there any conversation afterwards?

SR: It was one of those things... Remember communication wasn't what we have today. So the thing was that we didn't really know. And it wasn't until we got home. Very few people had car radios back in 1941. That was just almost non existent. So when you got home you turned on the radio and you listened and finally everything's coming in through telegraph or code. Of course television wasn't to be for years and years into the future.

CD: So how did you find out? So you were all at home listening to the radio?

SR: Yes.

CD: How did your parents react? Do you remember?

SR: Well, it was not know. Everybody kind of took it in stride that something... We're just going to have to accept what there is. And it was amazing in the community... There wasn't a lot of panic or anything like that. It was just the fact that people we really kind of standing by wondering what to do. And I've never lived through a time when during World War II everybody pulled together. My first recollection was that I took my wagon with another boy my age and we went from door to door and we collected scrap rubber. Remember there was no artificial rubber like we have today. It was all natural rubber. We collected scrap metal. We collected paper. And of all things, grease, cooking oil and grease. We took it down and turned it in to Shell station at the corner of Green and Neil Street, which is now Dunkin Donuts. And we didn't get paid for it. It was the thing to do. It wasn't, "Well I've got this much" and weigh it and all that stuff. We just turned it. It was the thing to do.

CD: Now how did you know to collect it?

SR: Well, they came on the radio and the newspaper and they said we need to start collecting everything for the war effort. New thing comes up called the war effort. And we did, well what we could do, we got our wagon and went door to door, knocked on doors and said, "do you have
Rankin

anything for the war effort?" Well, they went out to the garage and we got old rusty metal and different things like that. And collected paper. And the thing they needed the most of was rubber. And they'd gone through all the junk yards and everything and got out all the old tires and everything. So synthetic rubber was developed during World War II. But to start with it was all natural rubber and to build tires, for everything, you had to have rubber. And the grease... I don't know what they were doing with that. But it was supposedly used for ammunition. So I don't know if we fired a shell and bacon grease hit the other side or what. But anyway, we just started collecting and farmers, everybody, that had any kind of scrap metal or papers or rubber, anything lying around, it got cleaned out.

CD: Now did you talk about this in school? Did teachers talk to students about contributing in this way?

SR: No.

CD: And did students... Did you and your fellow students talk at all about current events?

SR: No, not really. Youngsters were protected from details.

CD: Really?

SR: It was just we were in this thing. Of course I was in first, second, and third grade, fourth grade and until the tide of the war turned at the start of 1944 it was just we do what we have to do. And teachers went right ahead and taught as if there was nothing going on. Which was probably the best thing. No sense in alarming students over something they cannot have any control over. And that's what they did. They taught and everything was just kind of as was.

CD: Did any of your friends or pals or customers have loved ones who went off to war?

SR: Oh, everybody did.

CD: Do you remember any specific stories of a friend of yours?

SR: There's all kinds of... My family's friends went into the service.

CD: Do you remember what that was like when someone would hear that he was called up?

SR: Well, it was just something that was going to happen.

CD: Right.

SR: So they took most of the twenty year olds first and then it extended all the way until thirty eight. Until you were thirty eight years of age. And my dad being crippled he was 4F. He

Rankin

couldn't serve. But it went all down to eighteen before it was over. But people put stars on a little banner on their window that told them how many of their sons, and by that time it started to be daughters, were in the service. And then if there was one encircled in gold that meant he was killed. And it was just the thing to do. A lot of people that age went and volunteered. There was a lot of volunteers. And these people had done us wrong, the Japanese and the Germans and by god we are going after them. And of course the thing is you get shot. We had a friend of the family and they had two sons that went into the military and one of them went into, I think, drove tanks and the other one was a foot soldier. And of all things they met in a street in Italy. Neither one of them knew where the other one was and they walked down the street and they looked at each other and, you know, the chance of that is millions to one. And things like that. So people went off to war. And the women they started taking the men's jobs. The bus driver goes and goes into the service, ok we'll train a women how to drive a bus. So the women stepped forward. Now we didn't have many industrial plants here but Decatur and Peoria did. Women just said, "If they need to do it." And women were recruited quite heavily in the aircraft industry. Typically they tended to be a little smaller than the men and were very good at crawling around inside the planes and things like that. You know a lot of the women, as far as the older women here, they volunteered at the Red Cross. They made bandages. They sewed up blankets and different things like that. And my mother volunteered. I can remember that. You know local Red Cross chapter was to make things, bandages for overseas and again the cotton and the gauze and wrapping them. Of course I was a little kid. I stood there and watched them.

CD: Do you remember where they did it?

SR: In this particular case Methodist Church downtown. But there was a lot of different places. The thing that hits us first was rationing. Now have got a family and get five gallons of gas a week. It was on an A card. On a B card that was as business person. They got five extra gallons a week. If you have a C card that was commercial. And that was for delivery people. So in the window of your car you had a little A sticker or B sticker or C sticker. And that told you what you were entitled to get. And that was one of the first things rationed, gas. But a lot of other things came along. You had sugar which was rationed. We didn't have a lot of cookies and pies. Meat was rationed. So it was always nice to know a farmer. I know we traded some income tax work for some good meat off the farm. You learn how to cook with what meat you had went into things like stews and meatloaf. And steaks you just didn't have or you couldn't have. But you had to go to the restaurant and then when you went into the restaurant it might be what they had. It wasn't what was on the menu but what do you have. So different things were rationed. You got one pair of shoes a year. That was it. A lot of things disappeared like bananas. That was one of the things I used in my Cub Scout talk is that they took all the banana boats and used those for the war effort. So we did get occasionally some of the real tiny short Mexican bananas but they were few and far between. Some of things that were hard to get, laundry soap. As I tell the kids we used to get up on Saturday morning at six and go down to the A and P store and stay in line until it opened at 8:00 am and run and get a box of laundry soap. You can't imagine things like that. Then my grandmother made lye soap because she took some of the grease that didn't get turned into the station and put loose lye with it and cooked it up in the basement and it was great soap. It takes the hide off anything. It was Champaign hard water, why you talk about

Rankin

ring around the tub. We used that for some of the rougher clothes. We didn't use it for white shirts.

CD: Where did your grandmother live?

SR: We lived with my grandparents in Champaign.

CD: They lived in Champaign also.

SR: Yes my dad's family folks lived here. They were originally from Deland.

CD: From?

SR: Deland, Illinois.

CD: I've never heard of it.

SR: Just out west of Route 10. It's in Piatt County.

CD: Ok. It's D-E-L-A-N-D?

SR: Deland.

CD: Ok.

SR: And they lived at 207 West Green, which is right across from the new Champaign library on Green Street. It was my great grandmother and grandfather who moved into town and lived there. And then my grandparents moved to Sidney, Illinois. And he ran the bank from 1911 to 1931 there and in 1920 they moved into Champaign with the death of my great grandmother Rankin.

CD: Oh, wow.

SR: The reason being was that your rural schools did not offer any college preparatory courses. I have my 1924 Champaign Maroon yearbook and very few of the students in there ever went through all twelve grades.

CD: Yes.

SR: Most of them were boarded in Champaign from Bondville and Seymour and Savoy and Tuscola. And all these towns around here they would send their children in to go to Champaign school and pay for it so they that they can have some hopes of ever getting into college. Well, I digress from that but anyway we lived with them until 1943 and then that time my dad and grandfather acquired a business big enough to separate and get our own houses.

Rankin

3/26/2009

9

CD: And where was your house when...?

SR: We lived at 1007 West Charles, Champaign.

CD: Ok.

SR: It's just one block Armory and Charles and about a block and half from Prospect. My grandparents lived at 207 West Washington, which is right behind the old Masonic temple building, which is undergoing construction now.

CD: And where... So it was your great grandparents who came into town. Where did they come from?

SR: Deland.

CD: Deland. And how long had they been... So they'd been farming in Deland?

SR: Oh, not really. My great grandmother always took in boarders or roomers. My great grandfather, was a peddler, a carpenter; he had a lot of things. And then my grandfather was a banker. He decided he didn't want to saw lumber or peddle pots and pans, so that's the way that went.

CD: And your great grandparents were your great grandparents born in Illinois? Or did they immigrate?

SR: Oh yeah.

CD: They were. So do you know when your family first came to Illinois?

SR: 1833. They settled in Cisco, Illinois, which is north of Deland. And so that'd be my grandmother's side of the family. My grandfather's side, is all my father's side, they came about the same time but they came overland from Virginia.

CD: Was that when they came to the United States in the 1830s? Or had they been elsewhere?

SR: They were here before that.

CD: Wow.

SR: I really don't know.

CD: That's amazing.

Rankin

3/26/2009

10

SR: Now my mother's side of the family we're all Scotch. Macleod. M-A-C-L-E-O-D. There's our clan right there.

CD: It's the yellow...

SR: I belong to the Clan Macleod Society. So my mother's side of the family we're all Scotch.

CD: Do you know when they immigrated.

SR: Yeah 1886 I think it was. My great grandfather, John Norman Macleod, married a gal from the same town in Scotland named Macleod. Margaret Macleod. They were all forty second cousins twice removed so that was the way things worked.

CD: Well, let's come back to Champaign Urbana.

SR: Alright. The war is going on.

CD: Right.

SR: And things kind of settle down. You listen to the newscasts at night.

CD: Let me ask you because I am curious and I don't want to forget to ask you about the railroad station. I've heard that other people I've interviewed have talked about how the railroad station was really a focal point because so many troop trains, it was the main mode of transportation given rationing and it was the main mode of military transport. So that there was a lot of activity, in fact, one of the women with the *Daily Illini* said that when they ran special editions they'd run them out to the train station. So give me your memories. Did you hang out given you're a train enthusiast now?

SR: No I didn't. The troop trains came through however the Illinois Central did not carry as many troops as other lines. It's a north south line and your east west lines carried a lot more troops than north south. So there was some but there weren't the great troop trains that went across the country from one coast to the other coast. So we didn't have too many. We did have trains that brought airmen into Chanute. By this time Chanute was expanding very rapidly. There was no road construction but if you've been from Champaign to Rantoul there's a divided four lane highway that was allowed by Roosevelt to be completed so that they'd have access from Champaign Urbana to Rantoul, which was a very small town because Champaign Urbana was the supply point. The bakery up on North Randolph had to bake all the bread, rolls and everything. Dairies were in Champaign. The food was here. And a little two lane road trying to get it to Rantoul wasn't going to work. So that's when that was four lanes about 1942 or something like that. And then the barracks were built up there and Chanute expanded quite rapidly. Not so much as an air force base. Very few planes but it was always a training facility.

Rankin

3/26/2009

11

CD: Training place. Do you have memories of any of the people from Chanute coming into Champaign?

SR: Oh, sure.

CD: Do you remember seeing... What was your reaction when you saw service men?

SR: The thing is you have to remember we are at war. Now if you are going to train people we had to do it in a hurry. You didn't have all this time off. They had to be back in their barracks by ten o'clock at night to get up at and muster out in the morning at six. So it was quite short and you didn't get Saturdays and Sundays off. These guys trained. Our involvement was that during Thanksgiving we would go down to the bus station, which was downtown behind the old Iman hotel, and we would get the names of two or three airmen and we'd bring them to our house for Thanksgiving dinner.

CD: What was that like?

SR: Well, they were so glad to get a good home cooked meal and to visit with people. So we'd go down and pick them up, oh probably about ten in the morning and bring them in the house and we had fire in the fireplace. We did have a fireplace. And cooked a meal I don't know how it worked out ration wise if we got extra or what. But it was typical Thanksgiving dinner. Visit with them and they got to get back to the bus station down there and the bus would come down from Chanute and they had to be back up in their barracks by five or six, I don't know what it was. The air men came to Champaign. The front part where my dad's safe deposit boxes are, I think the Dragon's Horde was there on corner of Neil, corner of Neil and Taylor. That was USO. And people would come in. Air men would come in and go to movie. What little time they had off. They did have a little time off but basically it wasn't very much. They would come in and go to movies and a couple, probably three, restaurants downtown and they would come down on the bus and go back with the bus.

CD: Would some of these soldiers be from the training, the military training at the University?

SR: No.

CD: No.

SR: Ok. I'm thinking ROTC. Let's get into University.

CD: Ok.

SR: Now the University had the Navy program. From the old gym, men's old gym or old men's gym whatever it is, up to Beckman those were all signal towers were built in there for the guys to have their wig wag signals and also their lights and all that. That was all training for them. The

Rankin

on campus itself there was at the west side of the stadium where you go in the doors it's a big paved area that was the diesel shop. That was the V-12 diesel. And what they were doing there they had great big diesel engines in there running and guys trained on how to take care of them. And right out where the doors open there was a big smoke pipe coming out of there. And you'd go by there and the thing'd go woo, woo, woo. You know? You could hear it.

CD: Would you ride your bike down there or walk down to campus?

SR: Oh yeah! We'd go down there all the time.

CD: You and your family or you and your friends?

SR: No me and my buddy.

CD: How would you get down there? Would you walk or did you have a bike?

SR: Well, we had bikes.

CD: Bicycles.

SR: That brings up another thing. Ok now the Stadium across First Street, from First Street over to the railroads tracks that was all victory gardens. What they would do is they plowed up that area, which is a parking lot and they'd take the soil and analyze it and then you'd go over to the administration building and paid your two dollars and you got a plot. They told where it was. We always got two plots so we'd spend all four dollars. And everybody grew vegetables and obviously they all got ripe at the same time. But we shared vegetables but nobody stole them. We did not have this problem of stealing things. We were all in this together. In other words don't steal. I don't think we ever lost a tomato or anything like that.

CD: Well probably to a bird or raccoon.

SR: Yeah. Now just north of the Stadium and north of IMPE that was all the parade grounds for the cavalry. The horses. The horse barns right where the law building is. So we'd go over there and that was always fun to go over there and watch them groom the horses.

CD: How many horses did you think they had?

SR: I would say they had forty or fifty horses in there.

CD: Really?

SR: It was a long building both ways with the center thing kind of open and a higher roof right there. It burnt down. The straw got on fire or something. They'd ride the horses across Fourth Street and then around that whole building. There was just two residence halls right across from Rankin

Huff Hall. And the rest of it was just open area. Now in that open area they had an obstacle course. They had walls to climb. They ropes to swing across. They had tires to crawl through. Well, we'd get three or five boys and we'd go over with the bicycles when they weren't around, of course we were a lot smaller we could go right through everything. Climb the ropes. So we'd take turns going through the obstacle course.

CD: And was there any kind of fence around it?

SR: No.

CD: Just open.

SR: Just open area. Of course that was inside the track where the horses were. Of course they used very few horses in World War II. Caught us so fast they were trying to fight the war with World War I tactics. And so anyway we'd go over there and that was another thing we could do. If you got bored you went over and grabbed the hoe and rake and everything you got on your bicycle and tended to the victory garden. But that was... Ok now let's get back to central campus. Where Wholers Hall is, that's the commerce building there at Sixth Street, they moved in a mess hall. Now where did all these people, all these guys stay? Biggest place was the Ice Rink. The second place temporarily was the Armory. Now the Armory was built in World War I. That was all... They put a second floor in where the track is and upstairs there's all these windows they had to put those in. But World War II they didn't do that. They used that more for marching and drill. The federal government took over every fraternity and sorority on campus and that's where they housed all these kids. I mean all these people in the military. Remember the students weren't here. So these fraternities would have to board up their places. But in the phone book, you get a 1944 Champaign directory it will show all the houses on campus, the Greek system was all commandeered by the military to stay there. The military paid them for, you know, everything they did. There was not people. It is hard to explain. There was nobody on campus except the military.

CD: Well, there were students though because...

SR: Very few.

CD: Right but there... They were here.

SR: You ever see a times table that says TBA?

CD: Um hmm.

SR: To be arranged. A lot was to be arranged. I had a friend of mine that went through landscape architecture. He was the only one that ever graduated in that school and he arranged his courses with the instructor just when they could get together. Not with time tables. There were people on campus. That is true but it was so few. And a lot of people get this confused

Rankin

with after the war. Now after the war classes started at seven and they ran until nine and from Saturday it was eight until two. But during the Second World War if you took the military off the campus there were very few people going to school. And an awful a lot of women went but here again it just dwindled down to nothing. If you wanted to park you could park on Wright Street anytime you wanted to. There just wasn't anything there. The street lights were turned off at night to save electricity. The Illini Union served good food and by the way I was there the day they dedicated the original building. I was there fifty years later for the fiftieth anniversary. We'd go down and eat in the cafeteria after six. Before six all the military would go through and then if there was any food left over they would serve us, the civilians, until the food ran out.

CD: And was that something you did, again, with your buddies or was your parents...

SR: No this would be parents. They'd go over and say, "Well you want to eat at the Union right?" "Ok." We'd go over and we'd stand aside and they'd come out and say, "Ok. You can go through and this is what we got left." Most the time there was enough food for us but a lot of times they'd be out of food.

CD: Would you walk down as a family there or would you drive?

SR: Oh we'd drive over to the campus. Like I said you could park on Wright Street. There just wasn't too many people around. But they fed people there and in the South Union. They fed people in the fraternities and sororities. And this made great opportunities for cooks and especially the black population. Black, I won't say they let them out, but a lot of the women who were not working at the department stores downtown, everything like that, they were cooks.

START OF TAPE 1, SIDE B

SR: And there was plenty of employment for black people. You have to remember there was a lot of prejudice still with the blacks in Champaign Urbana. I was very proud. My grandfather Rankin was the only person in Champaign Urbana that would loan money to blacks to buy a house. He loaned private money. But the people he loaned to was barber, concrete finisher, janitor that had all the locations downtown. People he knew. Good upstanding family people. But your regular banks, "Well that's black we don't want to do it." So he loaned private money. People had money. It was not a savings loan. He would loan out money and we would, you know, interview these people and that was it. Prejudice it a fever pitch. Went to school with a girl who was a year younger than me and sat outside, last name was Konzo, and Konzo was a professor of mechanical engineering at the University. But he was Japanese. Aren't you afraid of him? No! I am not afraid. The people were afraid. The guy that lived next to us on Charles Street last name was Lucka. And all of his mother and father and two brothers and a sister still lived in Germany. Well aren't you afraid of him? The poor man worked himself almost to death at the Purity Sunbeam Bakery baking bread almost around the clock and buns to keep Chanute field going. He was production manager. And if somebody got sick then he was in the middle of it helping. Aren't you afraid of him? No I am not afraid of him. He had kind of a German accent. Real good people but it was surprising that things like that occurred in this community,

Rankin

which he considered as cosmopolitan. But there was a lot of things like that that happened. Well, growing up as a boy I didn't see anything wrong with the guy next door. I didn't think he was going to stock pile bombs and bomb the University. And this professor Konzo his son Jane graduated class of '53 from Champaign High School and he finally retired as a professor of engineering at the University. So you ran into some of those type things but as far as the races worked together. In other words, if you were black it wasn't them and us. You had to work together for a common good. And I think it did a lot to foster the fact that these people, black people, could work just as hard and just as good as white people. Ok, that got off on that. So anyway the campus was kind of void of people. People just got along. Joseph Kuhn down in Champaign was still in business. They had, when the war started, three complete floors of clothing.

CD: This is Kuhn?

SR: Yeah they're still down on Main Street. Had three full floors of clothing. First floor was all men's clothing but general shirts, underwear, and so forth. Second floor was suits. Third floor was mainly children and younger thing. Before the war ended the second and third floor had been closed. The first floor had tables right down the middle. That's all they had to sell. I was telling in my talk in bicycles, how many youngsters got a bicycle for Christmas or how many got one for birthdays and a lot of kids raised their hands. I said when I was in World War II there wasn't any bicycles. If you could find one you couldn't even buy a tire for it. So you had to patch it and make sure... We had a lot of decrepit bicycles but there wasn't any... It's how much money you had. Your money... We had price controls. A group called OPA, Office of Price Administration, and they froze prices. So whenever there was a scarcity of something and somebody ups the price of everything. You couldn't do that. So that kept your price stabilized which meant that I could ride the Champaign bus system I could ride from my house clear out by the country club all the way to courthouse Urbana for a nickel. They couldn't raise the price. We saw a lot of movies because that was a place to go. In the wintertime we played a lot of card games, monopoly, made popcorn, and things like that.

CD: I think you... Correct me if I am wrong but I thought at the Early American Museum you corrected or added some information to our presentation when I was talking about interviewing one of the women who was an editor at *Daily Illini*. And her memories of the working with the printers and I think I said that she remembered not being allowed down into the basement.

SR: That's right.

CD: Remind me what you said. I thought you added something to that.

SR: Well, the thing was that one of the reasons they weren't allowed down there was there was all men doing the printing. And the thing is it was in the basement of Illini Hall. It was hotter than Hades down there.

Rankin

3/26/2009

16

CD: And Illini Hall is?

SR: Illini Hall is corner of John and Wright Street.

CD: Ok.

SR: And that building is still there. That was the original Illini Union years and years ago. Ok it was so hot that the men actually could not work in any shirts and you got to remember that at this time that there was a certain amount of modesty. And the thing was that sometimes... of course one of the printers lived right across the street from me.

CD: Oh really?

SR: And Bud Klockner. And the thing was they would actually strip off their bottoms and got down to their shorts they were so hot down there before they passed out. Well, I mean not walking shorts but regular underwear shorts, you know? And they just didn't want women down there milling around. It was so hot even with all the windows open. And so anyway it was just... the *News Gazette* had the same problem. They didn't get all the way down to their shorts but it was so hot up there with the hot lead. You got to remember those old type setters were hot lead. And I've been in the *News Gazette* and its been in the summer time before air conditioning it would be one hundred and twenty in there. Guys just trying to water and gallons of sweat through everything. So it was not a pleasant thing. I think that it came more from that than anything else. It just it's not a place to be seen.

CD: Do you remember reading the *Daily Illini*? Did it circulate in town?

SR: It circulated in town. In fact my Scout Master was the business manager for the *Daily Illini*. Paul McMichael.

CD: Paul McMichael.

SR: Yeah. And so they would take all the editions that didn't sell, they didn't throw them out, but they'd take them and we stored those on the fourth floor of the Illini Union. And then when they'd have a paper drive for the Boy Scouts we'd go over there and take them down in the freight elevator, off the loading dock, and give them to the local Scout council. So the *Daily Illini* was a fairly factual paper. It was not... After the war it turned fairly liberal. And you know but we had, on the campus, at the end of World War II you had Willard was still the president and the campus was totally, totally very conservative. I started working at the University in 1957 and I had to wear a suit to work in the administration building everyday. And we were still required, somewhat, we were getting rid of the hats. But we had to wear a suit and you could take your coat off in the office but as soon as you went somewhere you had to put your coat back on. I mean things that didn't serve any purpose but we were changing. The *Daily Illini* was getting more of a liberal slant all the time. And so a lot of people kind of considered it as kind of a left wing radical paper for a while.

Rankin

3/26/2009

17

CD: But this was after the war?

SR: Yes this was all after the war. But during the war it was factual. And the thing is it was fairly thin paper. Paper was hard to get so you didn't waste it on a lot of extraneous things. There was ads for things and there was just a certain amount of paper available. So you just used... the *Daily Illini* was not that big. It was by subscription too. Any by subscription, I don't know where during World War II where that was given away to people on campus because I can't comment on that because I don't know. *News Gazette* you always had to pay for it and the *Courier* of course was a business and we had to pay for it. But I can only remember the *DI* as being something you had to pay for.

CD: Now did you ever come to campus for any kind of other events besides dining at the Union?

SR: Yeah at the auditorium they had different events there that kind of interested people. One of them was the Audubons Society. They'd have people come in and show movies or slide presentation on birds and different things. And we'd go to things like that.

CD: And this was during the war?

SR: During the war.

CD: How interesting.

SR: And there were some other things. Occasionally there'd be a music concert over there that we would go to.

CD: And would there be... So who else would be in the audience with you? A lot of community members or with some of the service men?

SR: It was just a mix.

CD: A mix.

SR: Just kind of a mix of everything and anything. But you got to remember the service people they were going through here very quickly. There was not time for a lot of activities. In other words, you went to school, you got up and you went to bed and you went to school. And this free time, it's hard if you weren't here, free time just didn't exist for these people because they had to get them trained and overseas. The war wasn't going to say, "hey wait let's put it on hold and we'll take Saturday and Sunday off." Things went on all the time. Sunday morning it was, I think, required a church service for the different ones. And it just... Seven days a week whether it was instruction to get them out of here as soon as possible. So there's very little time off. The USO provided, you have to keep this in context, they provided an escort service for the men.

Rankin

The women did. Now this didn't mean that you got a hotel room and spent the night. But these guys have been taken away from their family and they would walk down Park Street down to West Side Park, sit and talk and maybe go have something to eat downtown. But just be around a woman.

CD: Yeah.

SR: And this didn't involve... Although I'm sure there was a section of town that you could have had other pleasures but they were away. A lot of them, most of them were married. But there wasn't anything. It was just being around a female because the only thing they'd seen, like being in prison, the only thing you'd been able to see was males. And, you know, they just kind of wanted to be around a female. And I know a lot of upstanding people would go down, involved here, and they'd go out for a walk or visit or something like. Do what you're doing. Well where you from and where you think you are going. All that stuff. But it was very upscale type thing. There was no hanky panky. And most these guys, if they were in town, were only here for a short time because they had to get back to base or back on campus for bed check and all that stuff. So there was some of that. And it didn't last too long but it gave the guys kind of, you know, just got tired of just being around guys all the time.

CD: Now this is provoking a memory I am not sure if this was you who told me this or some one else? Something about the power plant? Something over by the power plant and some less reputable..?

SR: No this was after World War II.

CD: Oh, ok.

SR: What they did is they brought in...

CD: So it was you.

SR: They brought in barracks and a lot of them were little small living units. They set them out east of the power plant and everything. Some enterprising young men got the idea that they would put some women in there and the University police were like "why do we have a line outside of these little things?" Well, it was obvious what it was. That was after the war and had nothing to do with the war.

CD: And they were students, the men who had organized this brothel?

SR: Yep. They brought some women in. I don't know where they came from. But it was, you know, to put it very inappropriately that was a quickee. That went on but that wasn't until after the war. Here again you have this sense of being one group of people trying to get an objective. And things like, is this trip necessary and all your buildings on campus, turn off your lights when you leave the room. Don't use any more power. We turned off the street lights at ten o'clock.

Rankin

And you didn't have a lot of vandalism or breaking in and everything because everyone was in the same boat. And just wherever you can save money do it. Or save energy. Or save resources. That's one of things that did happen on State Street right across the street from the Library, new library. In the parking lot they were building grain storage bins. Now these were constructed of two by six walls on twelve inch centers and they were going to be taken out into the country and farmers were going to store grain in them. Because if we were bombed you couldn't get all the grain. Storage now, the big elevators, contained a lot of grain but there wasn't any stored on the farms per say. So the federal government got this whole idea of building these grain storage buildings. So that was the high school and in shop class we'd go out and they built these big storage units. Well, as it would happen, nothing... Finally said stop it we don't need it. So three of them wound up at our scout camp as cabins.

CD: Oh, that's funny!

SR: But, you know, there was a lot of hurry up and do something and then we found out why are we doing this? It was just like, it was not a panic, but you get into these things and hindsight's great. So we didn't need them but it gave somebody something to do and they were going to come in and put them on trailers and haul them out and have all the farmers put wheat in them or beans, or corn. Well, thing was it was ill fated to begin with because all the mice and everything chew holes in them and get to the grain but whatever.

CD: What about as the war... Various events during the war and especially towards the end of the war, what do you remember and what specifically...? Did you come to campus for anything? When you heard... Let's say the bombing of Hiroshima. How did you hear about that and did you have a sense of what was happening in town? What people's reactions were?

SR: When the first atomic bomb went off everybody was elated.

CD: Did people come into the office and talk with your folks about it or?

SR: Everybody was talking about it because they didn't understand what it was until we got the pictures back. And you didn't have instant photography but it took a while to get the pictures back to see the massive destruction. News was censored. In the evening there was two news casters that came on. One of them was called Gabriel Heater and he came on for CBS. And he always says, "Ah there's good news tonight." This was trying to uplift people. The other one was a guy that was one NBC H.V. Caltonbon and he was a... And the way he talked was a dead wringer for President Truman. You couldn't tell them apart. He was very factual. But the two of them came on and you listen to both of them. And what they were trying to do was put a good spin on everything though. Like Iwo Jima and places we'd lost thousands of men trying to take an island. You put on a positive spin the best you could for the war. In hindsight the dropping the bomb was, saved many thousands of lives. It also killed people. We know that. But I have a good friend in town, a Japanese friend and his wife, he was an American citizen and she lived in Japan. They were married after the war. The Japanese were the type that were going to fight to

Rankin

the last to save their country and until they were convinced that this bomb went off and what convinced them was the second bomb at Nagasaki. The actual Emperor of Japan took control of the military and said, "No more. We surrender." Tojo was the head of the Japanese army and he was not going to surrender until he was killed. It was an honor and a martyr to be killed. And these people were going to fight everyway. He would have lost tens of thousands of people. Of men. Trying to get Japan to surrender. But once the handwriting was on the wall he said, "Where do you want the third one? Do you want it on beautiful downtown Toyko or what?" They surrendered. So it was an elation and it was good and bad time. The good thing was that we were not going to lose that many more people. The bad thing was yes we killed a lot of Japanese. So where do you fit in this? We had people, the pacifists were just outraged. The people who hated Japan. Germans when they surrendered you could deal with them. But the Japanese at that time people who were in charge were going to fight to the last street. Germany decided ok enough is enough and we've had it and they gave up.

CD: How old were you when you heard this?

SR: I would have been eleven in 1945.

CD: So you were in school?

SR: Yep.

CD: So did people talk about it in school? You said you had a Japanese classmate.

SR: No it was a friend of mine through scouting years later.

CD: Oh, as I understood there was a daughter of one of the engineering professors.

SR: Yeah, she was a year behind us. We didn't really discuss it.

CD: Ok.

SR: We were in the process of getting an education in grade school and we were too young to really discuss it. When the war was over, why I was going into the seventh grade. By that time the war was left to adults. It was mainly, growing up during that time, what could we do to help. We stood around and whatever we needed to do we did and that was pretty much it. You didn't have a lot of discussion, although you could overhear parents talking different places. Maybe church and like that. And they read somebody in the community had lost a loved one. Why it was very common place to maybe lose in the Champaign Urbana area one or two a week that died fighting. It was all felt that it was for our cause. That we did not want to live under tyranny. We had to do this. We didn't start it. They started it. We had to finish it. So it was that type of an attitude that whatever took to finish it we would do it and we did.

CD: Let me ask you a couple more questions and then I'll open it up to you. But at your parent's office did any students or University professors or staff people come in to the office? Do you remember?

SR: Well, yeah some of them had safe deposit boxes there and they would come and they'd get their box and what they had in them I don't know. But a lot of them had little valuables.

CD: Did they talk at all about the University when they came in? I'm trying to get a sense of what the relationship between the towns and the University was.

SR: The relationship was very simple. We are in a suspended state of animation. Don't rock the boat and everything will come out. We are going to win this. So what we all did, it didn't matter who you were, you knuckled down to get to the war effort. It was just like that particular period of time you just stopped doing everything. And we left it up to the military leaders, to Roosevelt, and later on to Truman and they were doing their thing. We couldn't do anything about it. The only thing we could do is do the best we could. So University got into a period of kind of suspended thing where nothing really happened. Buildings weren't painted. Repairs were made only if they broke down. It had just... You just going to live through this. And once the tide of the war turned about the start of '43 then things loosened up a little bit. But basically when there was about three or four years in there that we are all going to pull together and get this done. So the professors that were on campus were too old to serve. A lot of them volunteered to go to, maybe, national labs or to wherever they could go to help out. It wasn't how much am I going to get paid for doing this. No, what can I do to help. A lot of professors did that. There was a gas station at Green and Lincoln in Urbana. Standard station. If you were a little short on gasoline because of some family thing and if you knew the guy who ran it and a lot of people did, there was always an extra five gallons worth of gas. Professors walked to work. They lived over there where ISR is and a lot of the places you could just walk to campus and walk back. Or they'd use a bicycled and most of them just walked.

CD: They lived in Urbana?

SR: Yeah, professors always lived in Urbana. But that was... They didn't use their cars that much. So gasoline expired. In other words there was an expiration date and if you didn't use it you lost it. So there was ways we just got around it but it was kind of a state of just hold on to what you got and do the best you can. And some professors left the campus, didn't leave their home, but I mean they left to go work somewhere or do something whatever it was going to be. And so that was... The campus just kind of came to a screeching halt and nothing really happened. There was some students going to school and they're just for whatever reason people just had this attitude we were all in it together so we'll just do what we can.

CD: My other two questions are about two different events. One is, and you were a young boy, but I'm wondering the impact of Roosevelt's death on you.

Rankin

3/26/2009

22

SR: It impacted everybody because he had led us through the war and up to a point we were winning the war. And this was a big shock to everybody.

CD: Did your folks talk about it? Do you remember how you heard the news?

SR: Yeah because ee heard the news he died in Warm Springs, Georgia. And the thing was that you didn't know how a haberdashery from Kansas City, Missouri was going to take over the Vice Presidency. What he is going to do. And Roosevelt just seemed like he was at the top of everything. He was a King. He had everything under control. He had Patton. He had Eisenhower. He had McArthur. He had everybody and we were winning the war. And suddenly he is gone. Oh, God now what do we do? How's this guy by the name of Truman... Who's he? Well, he was a clothing salesman in Kansas City. Well, the thing is that your Vice President's under Roosevelt were there but it wasn't even like the Vice Presidents today no body did anything about them. Until suddenly like Lyndon Johnson had to step up. Well, he just held the door open for the president. So this was a big shock to the people. When he passed the big thing was oh, God if he could just live through the end of this war.

CD: Did you remember anything specific your parents said when it happened? When they heard the news?

SR: Well, not so much other than the fact that we lost so many people and so many friends and sons and everything that death was kind of, you were just kind of letting it roll off your back after a while. And you just and it just happened. This is one of the reasons today I look back at a town like Tolono or Sadorus or somewhere and they lose somebody in the war in Afghanistan or something like that they have this big memorial thing for it. Big parades. Big everything. We lost hundreds of guys out of Champaign Urbana. We didn't have anything for them. Yeah we had the VFW and the American Legion but they make such a big deal out of his and I'm thinking all these other people that I knew and the families that lost, mainly, sons but I don't know maybe a few daughters in there, it just came home and were buried and that was the end of it. And a lot of them never came home. They're buried over in France or they were lost at sea. It was never anything other than console the family and ok we'll move on.

CD: And do you remember your folks consoling a family? Did any close friends of theirs...

SR: Yeah, we had a couple. It was mainly my grandparents we were consoling because their sons and daughters were in the military. We were lucky. My parents didn't have anybody close to them that was in there. Mainly because when my parents age were going into it it was towards the end of the war and they were up in their, say, thirty five on. So they never really got overseas but a lot of my grandparents had people. Just different ones. I can remember grandma and grandfather going over and sitting with them. Going to funerals. I went to some of them, the funerals, and I get so sick and tired of kids today saying, "I don't go to funerals because it's boring." Well, get a life. Funerals are to help the family. But anyway, yeah we had different... I can't think of and I don't want to give names because that a personal thing but we had families

Rankin

and we knew people that had lost people. And the thing was that was a tragedy to lose somebody in the war but the bigger tragedy was the guy that came back that was mutilated. That was where a lot of things happened. And luckily this campus had Tim Nugent who came back and at that time anybody was mutilated or had lost limbs in World War II, "Well they're misfits. They'll never be good for anything." And he proved them to be dead wrong. And that was more of a thing, well, because well your sure not going to hire somebody who's lost an arm. Well, you know today our attitude is it's the mind and what you can do. It's not what you can't do. But just the fact of looking at them he's walking around with only one leg. He has to walk with crutches. You wouldn't hire him would you? Well, yes you would. So this was maybe just about as bad as if the person had been killed. It was... People just were kind of, well, they were prejudiced but kind of looked at them like, you know, you're kind of a misfit. So the two of them went side by side. But after the war there was a lot of rehabilitation going on and a lot of people, men, lived out good lives with disabilities they had from the service. Some of them more severe than others. But yeah we did console people. And a lot of consoling went on through the church too. It wasn't a big memorial service for this guy who came back in a box. There was a funeral and he was buried and some of them never came back. But it was not a big circus performance that I call it when somebody is lost in like Iraq or something like that. I just can't, you know, it just seems like it's wrong with these people. I had a scout father who flew aircraft. Out of the hundred that went across to England to fly aircraft to bomb Germany three of them came back. He was one of the three. These people came back from World War II they didn't talk about it. They assumed their position in society. Got married and had children and went back to work. Here again this suspended thing. He went back to the same job or same type of job he had before World War II. They didn't have to... There wasn't a lot of mental problems. There was so much work to be done and so much to get caught up in that everybody got with the program after the war. You didn't have all these... We had so many come back from Vietnam or something and they are walking around and look like bums and all that stuff. We didn't have that. World War II, well, there were some naturally but basically they came back and said "Ok now that we have that job done let's get back to living again."

CD: And what about the end of the war? How did you hear about VJ Day?

SR: It was on the radio and everybody went to downtown Champaign at the corner of Neil, Main, and Church Street and there was a big traffic light out in the middle of it. And everybody was around yelling, screaming, and jumping. There were some people stupid enough to drive a car down there but people walked on the hoods and everything. We just all went down and milled around.

CD: And was it just towns people or did people come up from the University?

SR: We don't know where they came from.

CD: Yeah.

SR: There was a big thing on the campus around the Union Building but see we were townies so we didn't go over there because all the action was downtown. Now Urbana had a similar type thing but the big thing was downtown Champaign. Was the traffic light and people sitting on top of it. It looked like Times Square on New Year's Eve. Everybody's hugging and kissing each other and I got hugged and kissed and I was eleven years old or something like that and didn't know who these people were but well you take what you get. I was a little bigger for my age than most kids were. But it was a lot of jubilation and everything like that. And then one by one the rationing went off and we were able to go and buy meat without the ration points and then sugar and different things started appearing back on shelves. And here again they kept the price lids on. And the price, we bought a forty-eight Pontiac, the price was the same as the forty-one Pontiac. The only thing is accessories. Did you want four tires? These were accessories. Did you want a steering wheel? That's an accessory. Do you want this? Do you want that? Oh, you want seats? See they got around it. So when you got done the base price was the same but the thing is when you add all these accessories that you had to have then they got around things. So finally the price controls went off and the market place came into being and that was the end of it. Luckily the federal government like when Ford and GM quit producing cars they actually took the machines and marked them and kept all the hook ups and moved them to one side and came back and did their stuff. So it did not take the automobile people very long into producing cars. And forty-one Ford looked like the forty-six Ford and things like that. There was a lot of jubilation and the song Happy Times Are Here Again that was played incessantly until you almost threw up listening to that. There was just a lot of people. We've sacrificed. We'd pulled together. We'd done what it took to get the job done and now was the time for celebration. When the price of gas went off why, I mean the rationing went off of gasoline people didn't fill up their cars and drive forever. There was still a pent up demand for cars that had been through World War for a long time and people didn't trade them off or anything like that. But things started slowly coming back. The men's store downtown finally got stuff for the first floor, second floor, and the third floor. We were back to having some degree of normalcy.

CD: And do you remember the campus building up again with students?

SR: Oh and how! Oh that was the big thing. You see they came back with the GI Bill and that's when I said that first classes started at seven and the last class went at nine. On Saturday they'd start at eight and went to two. We had everybody in Champaign Urbana and if you had anyplace you housed students. The German baker next door had five living in his rec room in the basement. We didn't have anything in our basement. But students to go to school lived in unheated attics. They left the door open at night going to the attic to get some air but they had been in unheated barracks and fox holes and everything like that. And guess what we charged all these kids? Nothing! Very few people ever charged a student anything. They did get a little bit to go to school. Sometimes the student would make a donation but most the people and the five that lived next door were happy to get it because of the war. They had their beds lined up down there. They had a laboratory and a stool and a sink. And they showered at the old gym on the campus. So everybody made due with what you had but the thing was, here again, this war spirit. Look you guys were over there and I don't care if you were slopping food at Indianapolis at Fort Harrison and never saw a shell go off or whether you think you're here and you served so

Rankin

we are not going to take advantage. But for instances they didn't charge and whatever they got just keep it we don't need it. The extra water and power they used was negligible. So they lived in basements. They lived in attics. They lived in garages. They lived anywhere they could get the rain off of them. And they studied at the Illini Union. At the Library. They just went to school and they were here to get their degrees and they got them and went on their ways. So for a long time after World War II, '46, '47, '48, '49 in those times and then finally stuff started getting back to normal but it was just a period of time when everybody just opened up their houses and if you had anyplace to stay just come in. And the men going to school were very appreciative of getting a place because they were here to get an education and they got it. There was a shortage of faculty by that time.

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

SR: A lot of the instructors on the faculty, I can remember professors that only had a Master's degree and some of them only had a Bachelor's degree. If they came out of the military they were able to teach college courses and we'll give them credit for it. A lot of them that was trying to get enough teachers, professors to teach these courses. So professors were teaching maybe seven in the morning and at nine at night. So you talk about a load. Professors, they never bitched about it they just said whatever we got to do and try to get some more help. But they accommodated everybody that they could.

CD: Well, I very much appreciate you taking the time. We've been talking now for an hour and a half and I want to be careful.

SR: Well, unless you were on campus the big thing was this kind of suspended type of thing. We are going to get through this. We're going to be ok on the other side. The amount of students just dropped to little bitty things. And sports activities were dropped. At least some of them were. Women played on some of the teams. One of the things that that war did was it proved and brought up what women could do other than bear children and stay home. It got them out and they proved that they could operate machinery. It proved that they could do a lot of things. So the women benefited from that because the men weren't there. Well, a women can't do that. She can drive a truck just as well as a man. Well, no a man has to drive a truck. Well, they could grind gears just the same as the guys can. There was a lot of side things that came out. Prejudices were erased. That was before the war everybody had prejudice and when they came out of the war they were by and large, well, they didn't go away but they were less and you worked together. And there was a big prejudice in Champaign Urbana against the Jews, Jewish people. Well, they are business people and they started the war in Germany. They were persecuted. Their relatives were shot and killed or gassed or whatever you want to call it. And they put up and went around and everybody worked together. You didn't have this group of people and we're just going to sit out the war and do this. Everybody just went together and that was it. Schools we had, oh, kind of cover dish dinners occasionally and well you just did what you can. Oh, Christmas. There's a good one. Christmas you got a package all wrapped you did not rip the paper off. My grandmother or somebody she had a knife and she cut the things and take the paper off and use it next year. The tinsel on the Christmas tree you took it all off. You

Rankin

didn't throw it away and you put it very carefully back in the package. The lights on the tree, there weren't any Christmas bulbs so if you ran out of lights you didn't have one. So you didn't have the tree on very long at any one time. You didn't leave it on because if you burnt the bulb out, why, unless you had somebody who had any you couldn't get them. So little things like that. Kids today, you know, they get something they rip the paper off. No, no, no! You don't do that. So yet it was and we never thought about it. To this day if I get a present I still don't rip the paper off. I put my finger on it and I got a nice piece of paper to wrap another present in. So little things like that carried over forever. And the food we ate. We ate a lot of mixed food. You'd put like meat, well, you'd use that in spaghetti. Cubed meat you'd use in stew. You know the thing is as far as having a steak you'd cut that steak and put it in something else and extend it. So a lot of things like we'd have beans and get a piece of ham and cut that up and have ham and beans. A lot of little things like that that we were raised on and got to like. Kids today, "Eh I don't like that." Well, we did. It has been very, very enjoyable and I hope and I've enjoyed talking to you.

CD: Oh me too! This has been great.

SR: Maybe I didn't answer everything about the campus.