

University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
Interviewee: David Eisenman (Part 1)
Interviewer: Katie Nichols
Length: 1:56:36

Katie Nichols: Okay, it's recording.

David Eisenman: All right.

KN: All right. So just for the record, can you tell me your name and birth date?

DE: Sure. David Paul Eisenman. 3/10/1943.

KN: Okay. And just for some background, can you tell me a little bit about your childhood, where you grew up?

DE: Sure. Bradford, Pennsylvania, the high-grade oil metropolis of the world. Home of Kendall, Pennzoil, and Quaker State, and Zippo lighters. Why zip, zip, zip, when one zip will do it? [Nichols laughs.] 20,000 people, foothills of the Alleghenies, northwestern Pennsylvania. [Coughs.] And as a child, I had a bottle of oil from the world's first oil well, Colonel Drake's well at Titusville. So we were—we were oil field, the original oil fields of the world. And neighbors of mine remembered the beginning of oil. And you will see the end of it, well, as a fuel anyway. Yeah, might be a starting material for plastics when your children are my age, but that'll be about it. So it was an interesting place to grow up.

Then when I was 18, it was time to go off to college. So the least expensive place to attend was Harvard in Cambridge, and I have to say that as of December of my senior year, I wouldn't have been able to tell you where Harvard was. I wouldn't have known what state it was in, but I had applied to MIT, and I showed an interest in acoustics, and they said, 'Well, actually, the world's greatest acoustician is at this place down the street from us, called Harvard,' [Nichols laughs] which I'd heard of, but I associated with polo ponies. So I applied, actually after the deadline, and Harvard admitted me, and they had a policy in those days, which I would like to say I've had something to do with continuing into the present, of asserting that if they admitted you, you would be able to afford them one way or another. They would work it out with you. So they believed in making the place affordable. Some combination of a grant and a loan and a job on campus and a scholarship would make the place affordable. If your family was willing to do something within its range and you were willing to work summers and term time, you could do it.

And the fact is, it was the least expensive place, and still is. And people who complain about the cost of college should know that when I went to Harvard, it cost something like \$5,000 a year, at a time when the median household income in America was \$5000 a year. And now it costs \$55,000 and the median household income in America is about \$55,000. So the fact is, the price of Harvard, and other private institutions, have not kept pace with consumer price inflation. But then, after all, Harvard is not a toaster. But it has kept pace with family income. And it's

priced just about the same way with respect to the median household income as is, as it was, well, obviously 55, uh, 60 years ago, because I'm about to go to my 55th reunion.

So I went to Harvard. I majored in physics, until my junior year, when I switched to biology and my advisor, Frederick V. Hunt, the world's greatest acoustician, creator of project, Artemis—Artemis was the goddess of the hunt—which was a giant undersea sonar system looking for nuclear submarines from Russia. But who also invented the world's lightest weight, tonearm pickup, for those of us who still remember vinyl records. Anyway, FV Hunt said to me, 'Oh dear,' when I told him I was going over to biology, he said, 'I hoped you'd at least stay in science.' [Nichols laughs.] And both of us laughed like mad. But the fact of the matter was that right when I was in college, modern biology was coming into its, its age. I saw Nobel laureate after Nobel laureate, before they got their Nobel Prizes, lecturing on breaking the DNA Code, figuring out what was going on at the intracellular level using electron microscopy. So Keith Porter and Matthew Meselson and Watson of the Watson Crick model and others were assembling modern biology right in front of me and I simply kept going to their courses and watching it happen, thinking to myself, 'This is what it must have been like when quantum mechanics was being assembled in the 1920s if you were a physics student.' I had a wonderful time as an undergraduate. No question about it. Marshall Nuremberg came and gave an evening lecture about having broken the DNA code, which everyone was talking about, and we said, 'He'll get the Nobel Prize.' And of course, he did. And two of the best lectures of my life were given by people who got the Nobel Prize. And now, at my age, names come to me slowly, and I've been doing well so far, but it'll take me a moment here. Well, one of these lectures didn't get the Nobel Prize, but it leaps us forward to University of Illinois.

I went back to Harvard in '68, must have been spring break, maybe it was earlier. Might have been '67, and went to a lecture by Edwin Land of the Polaroid company, talking about his theory of the retinex, which was how the brain sees color. And, you know, sound, what our brain does with sound, is a straightforward, Fourier analysis. We take the very complex motion of our of our eardrum, and we we can resolve this extraordinarily assembled complex motion in and out back into individual sounds from, for example, each instrument of the orchestra, and we hear the fundamental and the overtones. So what we hear is mathematically represented by a Fourier series analysis of the sine waves. We—there's a one to one and onto—everybody can tell an octave, which is a doubling of the frequency of the fundamental of the sound. But color has no such analog. There's no such thing as an octave of color. You can't look at one color and say, 'Oh, I can tell that that, the frequency of that vibration is exactly twice this other color over here.' In fact, the color, color sense is manufactured in the brain. We compute it, and we compute it in a very complex way, which Edwin Land worked out, because he was working on color film, and he had to figure out how you could go from our sensorium to a thing that you look at that would actually remind us of the real world fairly reliably. I went to that lecture and came back here and said, 'We have got to get him for the centennial year of the University of Illinois.' So now we're suddenly at the University of Illinois, and it is 1967, '68, which is, of course, what you're interested in.

David Pines, who was in the physics department, but not anybody that was my advisor, or anything of that sort. Oh, I have to say, back at Harvard, EO Wilson, the great insect expert, but also ecologist, the man who tells us about the destruction of the rainforest, who is still alive in his

90s, was my advisor when I was in biology. I switched back to physics in my senior year, but I had to major in biology, at least for a while. Anyway, Wilson was my advisor. And of course, his kind of biology was in eclipse. All of the money was going to the molecular geneticists and people who actually knew about species and how they interact in the world were considered old fashioned and not of interest at all. And he could see that this reductionism of the molecular geneticists was going to be very damaging to our understanding of the world, if it were allowed to sop up all the funds. He was a discouraged man at that point.

Now, it turns out his best boyhood friend was a member of the University of Illinois biology faculty, and when I went back to biology, just for fun in the late 70s, I got to know the fellow in the next lab, whose name again will come to me in a minute here and his memorial service at the University of Illinois was one of the more memorable moments of my recent life, meaning the last 35 years. Anyway, that was Ellis McLeod. And Ellis and EO Wilson were boyhood friends, which, you know, the world is filled with coincidences.

Anyway, back to the centennial year. David Pines tapped me for the 100th, the celebration of the 100th anniversary of the University of Illinois, which came, of course, right at the peak of antiwar activism, which is the reason people gathered here a week or two ago. I went to that meeting of '60s radicals, even though you could have argued that I was the opposite of a radical, but, but we'll get to that. You know, there are, there are several topics I think we should discuss today. One of them is the centennial year celebration and what that did at the University of Illinois, what happened during that year, and how it inter, intermingled with antiwar and other activism of the '70s. Because the, the centennial year got us to thinking about what kind of education we were providing here on the prairie, and how it did or did not match up with eastern private liberal education. To put it simply, at the beginning of the centennial year, the Graduate College decided that they would like to do something significant, meaning, bringing in world famous people in many different fields to give special lectures or even put on artistic events. We commissioned an opera, for example. But the idea was that learning shouldn't be just classroom exercises. The outside lectures, the things that faculty attended, could be attended by students, and they could love it.

And I would like to say that my job was to be Sol Hurok, and you're too young to remember Sol Hurok, but he was, he was an impresario who, who handled great opera singers and ballet companies. And so my job was Sol Hurok for the University of Illinois. I was in charge of advertising and getting students to come to evening lectures and symposia. Things that they could get no course credit for, but would, it would expand their view of why they were getting an education. And by God, we did it. I think by the end of the year, attendance at a typical event was three or four times what it had been at the beginning of the year. But I had, I had *The Daily Illini* available to me. I would write previews of campus lectures and why you might want to go to it. I also had cooperation from the bookstore, so that we had all the books by famous people who are going to come and be on campus. We had a brochure that we handed out 20,000 copies of, saying books by fall semester campus visitors with a schedule of the lectures that were going to take place. And people really started to take dates to lectures. You know, it was good fun.

But it was going on at a time of ferment, as I say. And Martin Luther King was assassinated weeks after the end of the centennial year. Centennial year was '67-'68, so fall of '67 through spring of '68 was the bulk of our activity. And we had a centennial convocation in March or April of '68, at which Paul Schroeder, who was here a week ago, and maybe you were able to interview him, spoke as the representative of the students and announced that he was not happy with the education he got at the University of Illinois. After which, some of us met with faculty immediately after that celebration, and I would like to announce that at that, at that meeting, Charlie worked and I—Charlie was then head of the department of mining, minerals and mining, metallurgy and mining, metallurgy and mining. That department no longer exists. It was merged into what we now call material sciences, and as a matter of fact, I worked on that project many years later.

But anyway, Charlie Wirt, then head of metallurgy and mining, I think it was, and I sat down and we invented the 199 course, which I believe still is in the curriculum. Any faculty member who wishes to teach any course on any subject is free to do it. And prior to that, they weren't. Every course topic had to be approved by a curriculum and courses committee within the department and finally, at the campus level. But if a faculty member were willing to teach on some subject and to do it on his own time and without any increase in his salary or decrease in his other obligations, he was free to do it. So a certain extension of academic freedom for the faculty, but of course, accompanied with their willingness to do all the work for free, allowed them to teach, and students could take these courses for credit towards graduation hours, but not credit toward distribution or major, unless a courses and curriculum committee did, after the fact or before the fact, agree that this was something worth doing.

So one of the themes here is academic reform, and Paul Schroeder and many other people associated with Heinz von Forster, who was on the faculty, did feel that the education here was lacking in its flexibility and comprehensibility. My reaction after a semester here was that I was at a place that was sort of like a high school with a hotel attached. I didn't see the connection between where we lived, of course, I was a graduate student, but where this undergraduates lived and, and their learning. I had come out of the Harvard house system, which encourages dinner table conversation. I don't think I ever had a meal my entire undergraduate time that lasted less than an hour. And my friends from freshman year were in all sorts of fields, and we would tell each other about things we learned that we thought, even though somebody's majoring in something wildly different over there, he would still be interested in. So we shared information and went to each other's lectures. When somebody said, 'Now this guy is talking this week on something that everybody needs to know about', we would go. And I didn't see any of that interaction here.

So another one of my activities early on was to create, I would argue, the predecessor of unit one. I invented something called Regent Gregory housing, which was simply a voluntary floor in the residence hall system in which students who wanted to talk to each other about what they were learning. In other words, a place for gregarious scholars and Regent Gregory and gregarious went together pretty well. You know about Regent Gregory's grave, which is on the campus of the University of Illinois? He's buried on the quad, if you look carefully, between Altgeld Hall and the administration building. And he was the first head of what was then the Illinois Agricultural and Industrial University. Might have been the other way

around, industrial and agricultural. So it wasn't soon after I got here that I got involved in asking myself, 'Why are my brightest students as a TA in physics so lonely?' And the answer is, because they don't have anybody to talk to. And I had enjoyed constant discussion as an undergraduate. I thought this place could be like that, and it may have been because of Regent Gregory housing that I got tapped to work on the centennial year.

But as I was saying, right at the end of the centennial year, Martin Luther King was assassinated, and Paul Schroeder and I had planned to go to California over spring break and work on a political campaign. But there we were in his parents' apartment in Milwaukee, watching gripping television—the public broadcasting lab was just getting going—and we sat and watched a program in which they said, 'Well, we were following Martin Luther King around until he was assassinated a few days ago, and we were going to do a documentary about his poor people's march on Washington, but we've just thrown together some of the film we were taking, and we have people in the studio, and we don't even know how long this program is going to last.' I mean, talk about immediate television.

So we sat, and I took in King in a way that I hadn't before. I have to say I was a bit of a, of a extreme conservative in those days. I thought discrimination in the south wasn't going to go away until another generation of people died off, and that civil rights demonstrations so forth were sort of more provocative than useful. I was, I was not a big fan of demonstrations of any sort, certainly not violent ones, but even nonviolent ones of the King sort. But I immediately was impressed with King. So after that trip to California, I came back and said to Jack Peltason, with whom I had worked closely on the centennial year, 'I want to start a Martin Luther King fund. I want to raise some money just to have a memory of King in the form of a couple of scholarships.' And Jack said, 'Ah, we need a half a million bucks, and we need to spend it all this year because I'm starting this thing called Project 500, otherwise known as the Special Educational Opportunity Program, which is going to add 500 additional students to the usual freshman class next fall. But nobody's going to be able to say they're taking the place of anybody with higher scores, because we're adding them to the freshman class. I have volunteers in the faculty who will do extra classes, especially remedial classes, because the concept here is these will be mostly nonwhite kids from high schools that are less than wonderful and families that are struggling, and they might very well need some help with basic skills, but we're going to do something about the fact that this is a lily white campus.' And I think at the time, Black faces were less than 3% of the student body in a state where Black faces were 11 to 12% of the population.

Well, that's another strain that I want to pick up here, and that is, I got very interested in the question of access to higher education. So later on in life, I spent 15 years as the Vice Chairman of the Illinois Student Assistance Commission, which gives out, or gave out in those days, a half a billion dollars of grants and loans to college students in the state of Illinois. And I got there by a route that involved working for Governor Ogilvie in the early '70s, a bit after the era we're talking about here. But it was back at this campus that I started asking myself, 'If we don't have Black faces on campus, who else is missing?' And my conclusion was, race plays a role, obviously, in what happens in America, but money may be more important. And so what I concluded, after looking at data, that no one else, so far as I could tell, had even

looked at, I concluded that the University of Illinois had very rapidly gone from being a fairly egalitarian institution to one that was increasingly financially elitist.

It may be hard for you to believe, but this was an open admissions institution as late as 1961. If you graduated from high school in Illinois, you were allowed to enroll at the University of Illinois, and no one could stop you. So this place loaded up with people every September. Every basement room in Urbana was rented to some kid. You know, people were in coal cellars in the residence halls. They were in sewing rooms and, and lot lounges. And then the first round of our exams took place, and the trains took away the kids who gave up. And then we settled back into something a little more sensible. But you couldn't stop a high school graduate from enrolling at the University of Illinois if he or she wanted to. Then Sputnik came along in '57, everybody in America said, 'Oh, the Russians are educating their kids, and we aren't.' And everyone wanted to go to college suddenly. Even the not too bright, but very pleasant son of the head of the bank who was destined to follow his father into banking. Now he needed the imprimatur of a college degree.

Well, Harvard didn't get any bigger, and Yale didn't get any bigger, but University of Illinois and a lot of the public schools did, and suddenly it was socially acceptable to send your child to the University of Illinois because all of the North Shore people couldn't get their kids into Harvard, Yale, and Princeton. The ones who had not tried before were trying, and those places were overwhelmed. I think in my day, Harvard had three or four applicants for every position. It's now 20 applicants or 30 for every position. The probability of getting into Harvard is dangerously small. And when I interview kids for it, I say, 'Look, it's a great honor if they accept you. But if they don't, you can't take it very personally, because it's like throwing darts at the wall.' You know, it's just the probability is very low. Anyway, the University of Illinois was suddenly socially acceptable and I found data—[coughs] one of my great successes back in those days was I actually found myself working for both the University of Illinois and the governor's office.

In fact, we had a, believe it or not, we had a reunion recently of people who worked in the Ogilvie administration 50 years after Governor Ogilvie was elected. More than 100 people gathered at our own expense in Chicago to share—can you imagine any other governor in the last 50 years whose staff or people who worked on his staff would get together 50 years after he was elected, because it was such a time in our lives that we wanted to celebrate it. Anyway, at that reunion, John McCarter, who headed up the Bureau of the Budget in my era with Ogilvie, and who went on to head up the Field Museum in New York, laughed and said that he well remembered the time when he found out that I was ghost writing his letters to Jack Peltason, and I was ghost writing Jack Peltason's letters to him. And when I wrote both sides of the correspondence, the two men agreed with each other better than they ever had before or since. I was looking for the confluence of interest rather than conflicts of interest, and I knew both men, and I knew there were a lot of things that they could do together.

Well, that was a digression, and we were working on the question of, why don't we have Black people at the University of Illinois? Well, the answer is, we didn't have any white people with similar economic and educational backgrounds. And increasingly—well, oh, I wanted to come around to the research project that I still think is was a miracle. It turned out that the University of Illinois had been cooperating for years with Alexander Astin's freshman survey. And he was

surveying freshmen at certain select institutions around the United States, and we were one of them. One of the questions on his annual survey of freshmen was, 'Would you estimate your parents' income?' And everybody just looked at those data and said, 'Oh, come on, kids don't know what their parents earn.' And I thought, you know, actually, he was this—the survey was administered after kids showed up on campus. In those days, we had a freshman week for orientation, and so it was during that week that kids filled that thing out, and it was a huge sample. Every student had a chance to fill it out, and the return rate was very high. So we had what should have been statistically significant numbers participating, and the question was, could you trust those estimates? So I worked out with the Bureau of the Budget that we would remove ide—well, we would take the student's estimate of his parents income, match his last name and address with his parents' tax returns to the state of Illinois and remove—match them, so we have the parents' actual Illinois tax return number matched with the kids estimate, and then we would remove identifying information and be left only with a file that just matched kid with parent. And it turns out that we got what any statistician or sociologist would have suggested, which is a regression to the mean. Low income kids tended to overestimate their parents' incomes, and kids from high income families tended to underestimate their parents' incomes. But right in the middle, where the decision to give a scholarship or not, or how large the scholarship should be, the agreement between parents and kids was so incredibly close that we could have based predictions of the cost of tuition subsidy with great accuracy. And nobody had ever done such a study before, you know, and it seemed obvious to me.

Well, once I believed those data, I went back and looked at what students had answered to that question over a period of years, and I could show that the median household income of undergraduates at the U of I had risen much faster than the median household income of all Illinois families, proving that this institution had very rapidly become an upper income institution. But in the meantime, we were still pricing it as if we were serving the children of industrial workers and farmers. And in fact, just as I arrived on campus, the private sector was beginning to build very fancy apartment buildings for students. Up till that time, people remembered back to the early '50s when the GI Bill was bringing soldiers to the university. Basement rooms really were rented out. The basement of McKinley Foundation, for example, was a men's dormitory. Men slept in bunk beds just the way they would have in the army, and you couldn't get a kid to live in the basement of the McKinley Foundation by the late '60s. That was beneath everybody. Suddenly, kids were driving cars on campus. They had fancy stereos. And we were charging \$434 for tuition and fees per semester. And the state was supplying 66% of the cost of University of Illinois, but it was money that was mostly going to people who could have afforded Harvard.

So I got to thinking, well, I—as we left office after Ogilvie lost the election of 1972, we wrote a paper. We wrote a volume called *Papers in Public Finance*. And my contribution pointed out that a family at the 80th percentile by family income in the state of Illinois, if it sent two kids through the University of Illinois, got a subsidy equal to all of the taxes they paid the entire time the kid was growing up to the state of Illinois. And there were a couple of guys whose names now are escaping me—and I'm probably not going to retrieve those names, but they're somewhere—there were a couple of economists who argued that low tuition public institutions were, in the end, a device for transferring tax revenues from poor people to rich people, because places like the University of Illinois, the University of Michigan, and other prestigious public

universities were increasingly becoming havens for upper income families who simply couldn't get their kids into private education or seeing the bargain of low cost public education, were taking advantage of that bargain and getting their taxes back. And this was the beginning of the Republican rebellion against big government and big taxes. And there were many people who said, 'We want, we want all the money back that we ever paid in the government. We're tired of welfare queens, and it's time for us to get in on the gravy train.'

So I became increasingly bothered by the fact that the leaders of public higher education mostly were old men who remembered what the American income distribution looked like in 1948 but 20 years later, life was very different. Which leads to my next little lecture, and you see why this is I mean, I'm a hopeless bore. We can keep at this for, I know for a fact that I can talk without pausing for a minimum of 12 hours, and we're not going to do that. But you see why I didn't think I should be taking up time when people who are in town only briefly. Here's a fact that almost nobody gets if you looked at the American income distribution in 1948 by decile, okay, and you looked at the buying power of that money, by 1968 people at every decile had doubled their real buying power. Doubled it. So if you were at the 10th percentile and living in a cold water flat in 1948, by 1968 you could afford a heated three room apartment, and you might even have a television set. You probably still couldn't afford a car. If you were at the 50th percentile, and you had a car in 1948, by 1968 you might have three cars. And your house, instead of being 900 square feet, was more like 2000 square feet, and you weren't in a town anymore. You were in a suburb. But think about what happens if people at every decile double their buying power. That also means that the distance between any two deciles in buying power has also doubled. When you had 1000 in constant dollars, and I had 5000 you now have two, but I have 10. It used to be a \$4,000 difference [coughs] what we could afford, and now it's 8000.

The fact is, the low tuition that we charged for the University of Illinois in 1948 sort of suited the middle of the bell curve of family incomes. People around the middle could afford to pay that without going into debt, and there were still, by the way, plenty of jobs for teenagers. When I was a kid, people pumped gas. People actually punched in the price of every can of beans into the front of the cash register, and some other kid had put a little label on every can of beans saying 19 cents. Those jobs are gone, but I was earning 30% as much as my father by the time I was 13. I was an ambitious kid, and I was out doing stuff, and my friends were. So we could put ourselves through college. Families could afford it—if they were in the middle. Now, poor people have never been able to afford college, and rich people were able to go to Harvard then, and boy, were they able to go to Harvard by 1968. They were rolling in dough. I—my analogy is, take a rubber band and nail it down at one end and stretch it out, say, to four inches, and mark it off in, you know, 10 marks. And those are the the income deciles. Now stretch that rubber band to eight inches. Everything stretches. Everybody has more money. They're further from the origin, further from that nail at the end of the rubber band, but they're also further from each other, and that is what happened between the time I was a kid and the time I was a graduate student. But David Henry and other people running universities had not noticed.

The other weird thing in Illinois was that we centralized financial aid with something in those days called the Illinois Student Scholarship Commission, ISSC, and so the University of Illinois charged a low amount, but if you couldn't pay it, there was a state agency to which you applied, and they helped you out. Private and public. In public, well, they had a ceiling on how much

money they could get any one kid per year, and it was \$1,200, which was originally somewhat similar to what private institutions were charging some of them. It was always less than the tuition and fees, but it was a nice chunk of it. Of course it was that 1200 ceiling was much higher than the \$434 that we were charging. But because the university had no reason to ask itself what were the abilities of its families to pay, because first, they set the tuition low. Secondly, they didn't really administer much scholarship money. Nobody had been tracking the fact that richer and richer families were pushing out poorer and poorer families.

Now why was that happening? It was happening because we no longer were an open admissions institution. We started having admission standards. You had to have a certain high school class rank. You had to have certain test scores. And Jane Loeb, who's still around on campus and should be interviewed by you guys, was a statistician and a psychometrician, and she was keeping track of the correlation between SAT scores, ACT—we preferred ACT here at the University of Illinois—ACT scores and success rates. And what Jane had located, I found out, was that if you meet a certain minimum SAT score and a certain minimum high school class rank, you will succeed at the university, as well as anybody whose scores are even much, much higher than yours. Below certain scores, it's dicey. People will drop out. But once you reach that certain minimum, you can read, you can do math. After that, it is all motivation. There was a weak correlation between test scores and class rank and grades in the freshman year only. After that, performance apparently had nothing to do with test scores, as long as you were above a certain minimum.

So by the time I was looking at this in the sort of late '60s, '67, '68, '69, every college published a minimum class—minimum test score, class rank combination. It was a graph. It may still be in our admissions material. I don't know. I haven't looked lately. But we tried to discourage people from applying if they would be below a level that we thought, generally speaking, announced that you would probably be able to do the work. But because it turns out, what correlates with test scores is family income, because kids whose parents speak well and who get to travel and who have books around the house are going to score higher than people who may be equally bright but don't have the same opportunities. So in a competition, when it's politicized and when the admission standards of the university can't include looking at somebody's essay and being impressed with it, or looking at recommendation letters, or looking at unusual outside of high school activities, like, 'I'm the best trumpeter on the East Coast,' or, 'I've won an international math competition.' When you're not allowed to look at that, because you have to be objective, then it turns out test scores and class rank become the determining factor, at least as far as the public's concerned.

Now under the table—and you know that a chancellor of ours got kicked out of his job within the last 20 years because he was making exceptions, pointing his finger on the scale for members, for relatives of members of the General Assembly. Okay, but there, it turned out that a very large number of kids at the University of Illinois were being admitted without regard to those lovely published standards because they were football recruits or basketball recruits or swimming recruits or band recruits, or they were—the General Assembly members were allowed to offer free tuition to a certain number of kids, and if you got one of their awards, and those, by the way, without any standards. It was, well, you know, if you knew of some deserving family, but for

some reason or other they were unable to apply for the ISSC money, then the General Assembly guy got to give away awards.

Another one of my great successes was, I've always been a night person, and one night when I was going home at six in the morning, I met Ed Sanford, who was head of our financial aid office. And I had gotten to know Ed—this would be late '60s. Might have been as late as 1970. So there's Ed coming to work at six in the morning. I said, 'Ed, what are you doing coming to work at six in the morning.' He said, 'Well, you know, I really like to be available to meet with families and kids during the day, but I do have a certain amount of paperwork, so I try to get the paperwork out of the way early, and then I meet with kids.' And I said, 'Of all the paperwork you do, what do you hate most?' I'm good at answering— asking interesting questions. [Nichols laughs.] And he said, 'General Assembly tuition waivers.' Years later, I was out sweeping leaves off my walk, and he had long been retired, and here this very old man pulls up in a car and gets out and says, 'David!' And I said, 'What, Ed?' And he said, I said, 'How you doing, Ed?' He says, 'Well, I'm getting old.' And he says, 'You know what they say about when you're old?' I think he was 85 or so. He says, 'First, you forget names,' and he says, 'and then you forget faces.' And then he said, 'And then you forget to zip up, and then you forget to zip down.' [Laughs.] Anyway, Ed had a sense of humor. All right. I'm not—I'm forgetting the name—I've never was good at faces, and I'm troubling, I struggle with names, but the zipping I've still got under control. [Nichols laughs.] Anyway, so Ed says, 'General Assembly tuition waivers.' And I said, 'Why? What's this all about?' And he said, 'Well, you know, members of the General Assembly get to give these awards.' I think they got, they got four a year, and two of them were to the University of Illinois, and two of them were to any other state university. The General—and it was a tuition waiver. What happened there was the General Assemblyman sent a letter, in the fact to the University of Illinois, saying Billy Jones cannot be charged any tuition, because I say so. In other words, there was no money that came to the University of Illinois. We just were forbidden to charge that kid anything. We had to take him for free.

KN: Wow.

DE: And the General Assembly in those days had more, twice as many people in it as it has today. So it was 400 kids, or something like that, or maybe 800, I'm trying to remember. Anyway, Ed says, 'And you know what pisses me off?' Well, he might not have used that language. 'What gets me,' shall we say, 'is that very often, these are business associates of the member of the General Assembly.' He says, 'These are people who don't need this money at all. And, you know, we get nothing. The university gets nothing to teach these kids. And if they're going to give awards, wouldn't it be nice if they went to people who, for whom it would really make a difference, instead of just allowing the kid to spend more on, you know, vacations or whatever?' So I said, 'Well, gee, does anybody know about this?' And he said, 'Well, you know, no. I mean, I'm the one who gets to see who they go to.' And I said, 'Is that public information?' He said, 'Well, as far as I know it is.' And this was before William Buckley, these conservative characters, brother James Buckley, senator from New York, got the US government to come up with family privacy. I think it's called FERPA, family information privacy [mumbles]. This was public information in those days.

So I knew a woman who worked at the *Sun-Times* in Chicago, and the *Sun-Times* and all the Chicago papers used to have *Daily Illini* reporters who were their campus contact. So there was a kid by the name of Paul Ingrassia, who I think now works for the *Los Angeles Times*, and Judy Nickel, who lives in Washington now, but was on the staff of the *Sun-Times*, were people I knew. So I called Judy and said, 'Judy, write the following letter to the financial aid office at the University of Illinois: you want to know the names of people getting General Assembly tuition waivers, some kind of report. And it's public information you'll get.' I said, 'Now, Paul Ingrassia will come over and pick it up for you, and Paul and I will come up with a telephone survey in which we call these kids and ask them how they're paying for their college.' Now, of course, this is just tuition waivers, there's still room and board and books and travel and all that. And so I worked up a questionnaire that said we're surveying people to find out how you pay for college, which was true. What I didn't say was we're surveying only people who happen to get General Assembly tuition. So we just said, 'How are you paying? What is it costing you? What are you paying? We're learning about what—how kids pay for college.'

And kid after kid happily announced that my dad does business with so and so and so I'm getting a General Assembly tuition waiver. You know, they were very happy to say that, you know, 'I know somebody, I'm rolling in these doughs.' So then we came to a girl whose name I think I've forgotten because I feel bad about it, and she, she hadn't mentioned it. And I said, 'So what are you paying for tuition? Do you have any assistance with tuition?' Because she, she hadn't volunteered it. And she said, 'No, not that I know of.' And I said, 'Well, that's funny, because it says right here that you have a General Assembly tuition waiver. And she said, 'Oh, I can't talk to you any longer.' Her father had given it to her. Now that one really stood out, you know, of course. And so it ended up being a headline in the *Chicago Sun-Times*. And this poor guy, unlike many members of the General Assembly in those days, he had had a heart attack. He had eight kids. They were going to Catholic schools that had tuition that he had to pay. And her first name was Margaret, and I suppressed her last name, but it was Irish. Anyway. He finally was interviewed and said, 'My daughter is a wonderful girl. She got into the University of Illinois. We frankly, couldn't afford it. I gave it to her. I'm not ashamed.' Which was the best defense he could offer. But, you know, I don't know if he was reelected or not, anyway.

But do you know that that program continued for another 35 years? Every five years, once we blew the whistle on it, some reporter would go back and look at it again, and there'd be another round of scandals. And by god, it was in the '90s or later, I think, maybe even in this century, that they finally got rid of General Assembly tuition waivers, which, of course, aren't \$434 a semester anymore, you know. They're a lot of money. And the University of Illinois was beginning to get into financial troubles as the '70s opened. I, I'd been doing all this studying of why we didn't have poor kids on the campus, and I couldn't get anyone to listen to me, but I'd come around to believing that the Harvard model was the right one. Charge the actual cost of providing education. I want tuition to be at list price, cost of the actual education. That way, you collect money from the people who can afford it, and you're no longer creating what my father would have called 'an attractive nuisance.' This is a term in the law, if you build a swimming pool in your backyard, you have a duty to keep small children from drowning in it, because it's an attractive nuisance.

Well, pricing public higher education of high quality so far below what the private sector is able to charge creates a magnet for people who aren't eligible for financial aid. A guy who's sending kids to Harvard who has a half million dollar a year income isn't going to get a whole lot of financial aid from Harvard. It's going to really cost him \$58,000. But if he sends a kid to the University of Illinois, he can say to the kid, 'You won't have to work. I'll give you a car. You can go to the Bahamas in the spring, and I'm still saving money. Must you go to Harvard?' And I think that's bad for the kids, and it's bad for American education. If taxpayers' money must be spent on education, shouldn't it produce an outcome that we wouldn't have gotten without it? If the same wealthy people who could have gone to any school in the world end up coming to the University of Illinois, and we're subsidizing them massively, why are we doing that? And who's actually paying the taxes? As I said, my discovery was, you got all the taxes back that you'd paid the entire time the kid was growing up if you sent two kids through the University of Illinois, and that was back then. Now today, that wouldn't be true, because we've gone from the state producing 60% of the cost of University of Illinois down to the state giving 16%. So I've gotten my high tuition, I guess, but I didn't get what I wanted, which was high aid.

So I left the University of Illinois in 1970 after creating the SEAL program, which, over the subsequent 40 years, raised 20 million bucks for needy kids. I failed terribly with the Martin Luther King fund. I failed terribly a year later with the Human Resources Investment Fund. And then came the best project of my life, which was Students for Equal Access to Learning. So there it was. We were into our second year of the SEOP program. We were struggling to provide enough financial aid to the low income kids we were trying to recruit. And by the way, they weren't all Black. They were mostly Black, but there were poor white kids scattered in the program, and I would have wanted more of them, but we didn't know how to go about the recruiting very effectively. So I'll digress on recruiting for a minute. After that first bunch of SEOP kids showed up on campus, I got their names. It happened that SAT, the Scholastic Aptitude Test people from Princeton, had that year—and maybe even before King was assassinated, they might have decided to do this—for free, they gave SAT tests to every inner city Chicago kid. Okay, so we had any kid who was in school on the day the test was given, we had test scores.

What I found was that among the 500 kids we had recruited—actually it was 600 we over shot by 100— among them, there were almost nobody with the highest scores. So then I did a sample survey. I really believed in survey research in those days, and I got rather good at it. Seymour Sudman was on the faculty here in business, and Seymour was one of the world's leading experts on the asking of questions. If you're doing surveys, you really have to think about how people hear questions and how to test your questions to be sure they're going to get you the right answer. Anyway, I came up with a survey similar to the one I used to find out who is benefiting from General Assembly tuition waivers. And we called kids in Chicago who had scored very well in SAT and said, 'Where are you going to college? Or are you going to college?' And what I was shocked to find out was that the kids with the highest scores either weren't going to college at all, or they were attending community colleges in their neighborhoods in Chicago.

And I got to thinking about it. If you knew that you're likely to succeed, that you are outscoring the people around you, why would you take a chance on going to an institution that was rather

famous for being unfriendly to Blacks and easy to flunk out of? So what we got was the risk takers. We got very ambitious, exciting kids, but who didn't necessarily have the highest scores, they're just willing to get the hell out of Chicago and try something else. And I think a surprisingly large number, given how ragtag the recruitment was of that original SEOP group, actually did graduate and became prominent people. I've gone to a couple of their reunions, and it's one hell of a group. I mean, they came up—think of the era. The riots after King's assassination, the antiwar stuff, the Civil Rights Movement. These people were activists right in the middle of it, and they've turned out to be impressive people. But we weren't getting the high scoring kids. They were smartly cautious. I mean, smartly, from a short-term point of view. I'm not sure that they wouldn't have benefited from the University of Illinois, but they went to a place where they knew they could succeed and where they could keep a job. The other shock to me that first year of SEOP, when I be—by the way, by that year, I was supposed to be helping David Pines, not with the centennial year that was over with, that was a grad assistants' position. I was supposed to be, again, a grad assistant, but assistant to the director of the Center for Advanced Study. David was heading up the Center for Advanced Study.

The fact is, the very first week, freshman week, of the fall of '68, there was a riot in the Illini Union. On September 9, the SEOP students—and I was there all night. I had just come back from my end of the summer vacation. I was living on Daniel Street, just a couple of blocks from the Union, and Bruce Morrison, with whom I was living, who was head of the Graduate Student Association, called me and said, 'There's a sit-in in the Illini Union, and there's been some violence, and the police are coming, and you should come and have a look.' So I walked through a line of police and into the Union where I had the right to be after hours because I was a member of the Graduate Student Association, and we had an office there. And students with, with offices in the Illini Union were allowed in after official hours. I stayed there all night and interviewed people about what had happened, wrote up an account of what the events were of the evening, got every student leader on campus to sign it, issued it as a press release, and later built a—I think it was called *The New York Review of Journalism*. It was published by some university in New York.

I reported on how badly that event was covered by the Illinois press, especially the *Chicago Tribune*, which you will find this hard to believe, ran an editorial talking about Black students 'going ape and swinging from chandeliers.' I mean, I couldn't believe it, but the racist language and the, and the myth that \$50,000 worth of damage had been done the Illini Union—it turned out to be \$1,200. And nobody at the university contradicted these articles for weeks! I begged Jack Peltason to get on it, to stop the bad publicity. He was, of course, up to his neck in trouble because he had invited this program and then these 'ungrateful welfare products,' according to the *Chicago Tribune*, had rebelled against the hand that was giving them something and had behaved so terribly. I was in the middle of people who were so mad at Jack Peltason for not coming to the Illini Union and defusing the whole debacle, but he was under the advice of the university police that if he went there and got punched or in any way injured, it would be many times worse than it already was. So his failure to show up became itself an issue.

About a month later, when I was still issuing—I knew everybody in the press, because I'd spent the year in publicity for the centennial year, so I was and I'd kept up on this program. I knew

John Lee Johnson, who was the local activist from the North End, who understood the university's role in this community and the resentment of the Black community. Do you know white kids from the local high schools happily went into the Illini Union, even though there's a big plaque on it in those days saying, 'only for members of the University of Illinois community,' but they went there to play pool, eat in the restaurant. Nobody stopped them. But if a Black kid showed up, there were so few Black faces on campus that the university police would stop them, saying, 'Now, sonny, who are you and why are you coming in here?' And the white kids from town went into the gyms and swam and, you know, and played racquetball and stuff. And if a Black kid tried to do it, there'd be somebody right on top of him. John Lee knew all this. He knew what the town gown racial relationships were like. And that night at the Illini Union, there were kids from the North End, namely Stevie Jackson, who was a dangerous guy. I mean, he may have murdered people. He was not somebody you wanted to tangle with. And Stevie Jackson beat up John Hackman that night severely, and John ended up at the U of I infirmary.

There were, there was violence that night, but I was able—I satisfied myself, but I can't prove it, that not a single student in the SEOP program performed any violence that night. In fact, you'll laugh at this one. There was a window broken in the south lounge, a rather big window, we found out years later—now that that is the David Eisenman archive right there. Hugh Satterlee talked me into bringing those papers here some years ago. I don't know what the date of donation was, but in any case, Hugh found out 25 years later that Bob McNabb broke that window. Bob McNabb was the night supervisor of the Illini Union. He was so mad at some student that he threw a chair at him, missed the kid, and he broke the window. [Laughs.] But all of this damage, not that there was a lot of it, was attributed to the kids in the program, and it was really angry North Enders who had infiltrated the group and wanted to really tear the place up. But you know, our own staff didn't know that, but I knew it. I knew it because John Lee knew it. And John Lee and I met regularly, and he said, 'I know more about what's going on on that campus than the people on the campus know.'

People were—bureaucracies are like this. People are covering their own butts. The Office of Admissions was in charge of adding these kids to the, the usual input group. It was all being done very arbitrarily. Black Students Association students became recruiters. Some of them oversold the program. Talked kids to coming to the University of Illinois from other states. Talked kids to come here, promising them free rides when we actually hadn't ever said that. When they found out they might have to take loans, that was one of the grievances that were on the table that night. It was at the end of freshman week, and they hadn't gotten answers to where are we going to live? Well, the dorms were over—first place, we had 600 kids, not 500 the housing division had planned on 500 where they didn't have rooms for 1/6 of them. They were being told, 'You have to take loans.' And recruiters who were overselling the program had said they wouldn't have loans. There were questions to be answered, and nobody had the answers. And you know, and John Lee said, 'I've known about these problems for weeks, but nobody at the university is willing to admit. The housing division doesn't admit that it hasn't got rooms. The financial aid office doesn't even know who's coming, and they don't have grants. And the admissions department, uh, hasn't done a count yet.' So 600 people show up, and they're surprised that everybody was assuming that lots of this paperwork that had come in wasn't going to really ever deliver a kid. And actually, they all showed up.

So there were real issues that needed to be ironed out, and the kids weren't getting answers. And somebody sensibly said, 'Let's just assemble and demand some answers. We were told one thing and something else is emerging.' I met, by the way, there was a peaceful arrest of everyone still in the Union. The police said, 'If you want to go home, you can go home, but if you want to make a point of this, we will arrest you, but we don't, we don't want violence.' And so in an orderly fashion, at, you know, six in the morning, kids were arrested and hauled off and booked and all that crap. And then for weeks, it went back and forth about, will the charges be dropped? And Jack had to say, 'I'm not in charge of that. As soon as we called the police, it became a police matter, and I'm not in a position. I'm not charging you. It's the, it's the state using statutes about illegal assemblies, and there was violence. So unfortunately, you know, we don't know who did it, but it happened and there was damage, and people were injured. And I can't, but I'm going to—believe me, I'm doing everything I can to make sure that you can study. You know, that's not going to get in the way of your—.'

Anyway, at some point, Jack said, 'Now look, David, you have this job over there with David Pines, who's let you basically spend full time on this disaster, but you're issuing press releases, or you're talking to the press, and your information may be accurate, but it's, it's not anything that my staff are telling me, and I can't fire everybody. I've gotta live with the people I'm, I'm working with. But the university seems to be speaking with two voices, you gotta shut up.' And I said, 'Well, now, Jack, there's an easy solution of that. I said, I just resigned.' And for three months, I think I worked without salary, and I just, you know, when I visited with Jack, I always made a point of dressing informally. When I visited with the Black Students Association, I put on a coat and tie. I did not want to be overly associated with anybody, but I saw a role as intermediary and played that game for most of the fall of 1968.

And then as spring came around, the university had been wise enough to hire a series of graduate students who were sort of social workers working with the SEOP kids. And I said, 'Why don't we get those people together once a week, all those grad students around a table in the Illini Union colonial room, the little private dining room on the first floor. They had a, they had a private dining room off the colonial room. I said, 'I just want to hear what's going on.' And TA after TA would—well, they were, they weren't teaching assistants. I don't know we called—they were assistants. Anyway, they'd say, 'Well, I'm running into the fact that lot of the kids I'm supposed to be working with can't see the blackboard. They have uncorrected eye problems.' I mean, things emerged, and the one that but, but instead of everybody, you know, having to reinvent the wheel when we all talk together, we'd say, 'Well, all right, if ever—we have a lot of problems with getting eyeglasses to people. Maybe we can find some way to do that and make it orderly instead of every one of you trying to wrestle with it.'

And you know, I have to say this Jean Hill, J-E-A-N Hill, was a woman in the dean of women's office in those days who had been a social worker in East St. Louis, and she was working on the SEOP program. At the end of that first year, I gave a survey. I believed in survey in those days. I gave a survey to all the kids in the SEOP program and said, 'Who at the University of Illinois has been the most help to you this year?' Jean Hill outscored everyone else combined.

KN: Wow.

DE: Combined! I visited her in her 80s, when she was retired, and she lived in a beautiful little house right on the edge of the Urbana golf course, the Urbana Country Club. And she, she had shared a house for years with a woman doctor who was at the McKinley Health Service. That woman had died, so Jane was alone, but it was cute little house, and she had a fox family living under her porch. And in the winter, she could see the little baby foxes come out in the spring. And she had a computer, and she read. And so I said one day to her—by then, I was running the YMCA's Fred Bailey scholarship program, just as a part time thing. By the way, I've been retired since 1970. Yeah, I'm the most retired person you're ever going to meet. [Nichols laughs.] And I will send you an essay about that, some things I don't have to say here, because I've written them up. But I looked around in 1970 after the frustrations that I'm about to describe, I'm getting to the place where I retired. But anyway, at the end of the—yeah, in spring of '69, Jean was outscoring everyone else. So I saw Jean 30 years later, yeah, 25-30 years later, and I said, 'Jean, how's life?' And she said, 'I hate it.' She said, 'I just feel useless.' Well, she had been solving problems her whole life, and she was good at it, and suddenly there weren't any problems to solve. So I used to have her read scholarship applications, and we really gave the money out at Bailey based on need. By god, we weren't throwing money around just for some other purpose. Anyway, that taught me a lesson, and I have taken it very much to heart.

I work 23 hours a week in my 77th year, and the work I do is I sit in my living room and people ranging in age from five to 40 show up and we read aloud. We read challenging texts, we pronounce the words, we discuss what we're reading. Most of these people don't speak English as their first language. The children have Chinese, Korean, and Indian parents. The adults tend to be Chinese or Korean, and I've been doing this since 1980 part time. We call it the writing program. When they do have something to write, we work on editing, and I really have strong feelings about how we write. It has led to some wonderful adventures, but I haven't worked full time since 1970 or '71 because it dawned on me that retirement is wasted on the elderly, and that we work too hard when we're young, and that if Marx was right about a reserve army of industrial workers keeping down wages, we should have a reserve army of intellectuals who work on problems that everybody else is too busy to work on. I have never done anything my life that anyone else wanted to do, and as soon as somebody else wanted to do it, I've let them do it. I've walked away from jobs as soon as I got somebody else interested in doing it. So I like to be doing things and looking at things that nobody else cares about, or anyway nobody cares about, in a way that I wanted cared about.

But anyway, to get back to where we were, it was riot in the Union. I resign from the university, but I still have an office [unclear]. I have access to materials, and I try to keep things down. By January, I'm back on the payroll, still at the Center for Advanced Study, but not really doing anything for David. Mostly looking over how we can solve problems with the SEOP program and the next thing after eyeglasses that emerged was that a huge fraction of these kids didn't have driver's licenses. Now my old model was, okay, you take a loan, you have a scholarship, you work on campus, and then you have a summer job. We started asking kids in the SEOP program, what are you going to be doing in the summer? And we found that the women, Black women, had jobs. They were babysitters and house cleaners and, you know, aides and worked in department stores, God knows what, but the men didn't have any jobs. Unemployment among Black teenagers in '68, '69, '70 was high, and many of them were from Chicago, although not

all. So when I discovered they didn't have driver's licenses, of course, the image at the time was every Black man has a Cadillac and drives it around, and [laughs] [unclear] driver's licenses.

So the University of Illinois, in fact, I think it was based here in this building. I may be wrong, but I think that the horticultural field lab may also have been the place where the driver's license—we were teaching ed students how to be driver's license driver's instructors in high school, along with, you know, being coaches and teaching math or whatever the hell. And so whoever was in charge of that, we said, 'Well, why don't you practice on U of I students, you know, don't go looking for local high school kids to teach to drive.' But the university had a certain number of cars that were set up with dual controls and, and we got driver's licenses for as many as we could of the Black students to make them a little more employable. But we only let men do it because there were a limited number of spaces, and, was it? No, it wasn't Miriam Sperber. Oh god, there was a guy on the—here's where my names, okay. The last name is close to Sperber. Might have even been MaryAnn Sperber. There's Miriam. There was a psychological counselor who was from Vienna. She's not the one I want. I want the wife, also on the faculty, of a business professor, who was on the advisory board to SEOP, and she said, 'Why are you letting only men in this program?' I said, 'Because the women all have jobs and the men don't.' She said, 'Well, okay, but I'm telling you, the next great rebellion here in America is going to be the women's movement.' We're talking 1969.

Boy, was she right, you know, about a minute later, women were divorcing their husbands and racing out and getting jobs and all the rest of it. And, you know, I did a poster at that time, working with the same graduate students who worked on posters for the scholarship for the centennial year. I did a poster for the SEAL program that—I think it was Lanny Summies [ph] came up with—we had one torso with a nice tweed sport coat, and then a collar and five heads sticking up. And they were Beethoven and Einstein, and I don't know, four famous men. And it said, 'Contribute to the SEAL program, where we may save just the man we need.'

And I keep that poster on my wall to remind me why in 1970 I started saying 'he or she' carefully, because it dawned on me that I was taught you always use the male pronoun if you're referring to a person in general. But my mental image every time I said 'every student should bring his own book' was always of a man. There are reasons—you don't want to torture yourself. Now this nonsense about 95 different pronouns depending on whether you're trans, trans, or ultra trans, or, you know, I think we've gone a little nuts, but—and I hate 'their.' I'm sorry. Every time somebody says, 'She should bring their book,' or, 'Mary should bring their book,' I always see a multiple personality disorder. I see people who are somebody one day and somebody else later. [Coughs.] We've got to do something sensible, but I've said 'he or she' ever since 1970 because of—and it isn't Miriam Sperber, wrong name. Oh, I had it too. I had it last Thursday when I was talking to Lizzie Goldwasser, who is in her 99—she's in her 100th year, and I see her every Thursday to empty her mousetraps. It's really to talk and to see what, what she needs. But she's showing me how to be very old and on the edge of death. Because she's, she, she thinks she's down to the last few weeks. I think she's—she'll make it to 100 I think, but we'll see. We've got to bet. Anyway, we're having wine two days from today that says on it, Farinelli, because we took her to 'The King and Farinelli' [*Farinelli and the*

King] a week or so ago, because both of us know the guy who played Farinelli. But that was sure a digression.

We were in the spring of 1969 and it was time to try to raise money again. So by then, the university had noticed that on the support staff, secretaries, grounds men, so forth, there again was a lack of Black faces. And so how was it that unionized employees and non-unionized employees around the university seemed to lack Black faces given the Black population of Champaign. So there was an effort to begin to be serious about affirmative action and Joe Smith, Joseph Hester Smith, English professor, who had been brought to the university to help with an increase in our Black population, was about to become an official affirmative action officer for the university. Joe just died, 94, within the last year, and we were, we were good friends in those days. I learned a lot from Joseph Hester Smith. But again, money was needed for training, for outreach, and once again—oh, I never told you about how the Martin Luther King fund failed.

Well, when Jack said we need a half million bucks, not just 30 or 40,000 of I produced a few thousand a year. I went to town and we, the U of I Foundation, was willing to print up pledge slips. We asked students to contribute five bucks and faculty to consider contribute maybe one-half percent of their, their income or 1% or anything they wanted to give. But, you know, we said we have a real challenge here to make the University of Illinois student body look a little bit more like the teenagers of Illinois. And it was a very disappointing return. I think we raised less than \$10,000. I may be wrong, but I think it was less than 10,000. The next year, we tried to broaden the, the, the task. We wanted money for students, but we also wanted money for staff training and for improving access to the university employment on the part of non-white people from Champaign-Urbana, and once again, we fell far, far short of our goal.

Now that first year that we had pledge slips that used to be on tables at the Illini Union and other places around campus, there were local anti-integration groups. There was—one of them ran a phone line. You could call it and get information. It was called the 'freedom line.' It was run by a man by the name of Keith Whited, H-I—W-H-I-T-E-D, which was amusing. And if you called up and listened, you would hear about how Martin Luther King was a communist and had been subverting the United States, and there was going to be a Black rebellion, and everybody really—the Reverend Bill Binney, B-I-N-N-E-Y, used to be on the radio in Champaign a couple times a week, and he would tell you how the Blacks are going to rebel, and you better have clean water in your bathroom, because when the riots came and your houses were burning down, you had to have drinking water and food. And those people came on campus and started filling out pledge cards with false names, making it look as if we were raising much more money than we were. There was sabotage.

This—I hadn't seen such overt racism growing up in rural Pennsylvania, and I was really kind of surprised, and what I realized was Champaign is right on the border between very racist southern attitudes and racist northern city attitudes that came after the great exodus from the South that followed the 1927 flood on the Mississippi River. But I started hearing stories about how Black people got treated in Champaign, and I began to see why if you were Black in Chicago, you might not want to come down here. But it was disappointing to have such bad luck raising money.

And then in the summer of '69, it came to me that we'd gone about this perhaps the wrong way. And I got a bunch of students together at the YMCA, we formed an organization called Students for Equal Access to Learning. I was about to tell you about the best thing I ever did in my life. Well, S-E-A-L, SEAL, and it was good group of kids. They worked pretty hard, and names aren't going to come rapidly, but I remember those, there were maybe 10 kids, and I was sort of the staff advisor. I was that—I had taken a new job. I was going to officially work in the—I had been put in the Dean of Men's office, just as centennial coordinator, just to have a place to operate from. I was back there. Now I was really on the staff, I think of the Dean of Women. Or maybe officially I was on the staff of the of the Dean of Students, Stanley Millet. Well, Millet and I fought all through that first year of the SEOP program. He was, he was not a sympathetic figure, and he and I tangled. We're going to get to riots on campus where I interact with the—make sure I talk about white arm bands. But that comes later. We want to wrap up SEOP and fundraising here. Okay.

So anyway, group gets started, and that fall when everybody came back to campus—registration used to take place in the Armory, and every student went to a table and got an IBM card with punch holes in it for every course that he or she wanted to take and the exact section. So you worked out your schedule. Over a period of a week, 30,000 students marched through the Armory and went to tables for every department, chose courses, got a card that signed you up for a specific section in a specific location and a specific course. You then carried your stack of cards to a cashier and paid your tuition and fees, and now you are registered.

But everybody registered in person in those days. So we said, 'Ha! What would happen if we put into the hand of every registering student another IBM card that said on it: We have about a half a million dollars shortage of financial aid this year. We think you should value having classmates who are really representative of the people of Illinois. If you want to help out, if enough of us gave five bucks—we have 30,000 students—if enough of us gave five bucks this semester and next, we could make a big dent in that half million dollars. So all you need to do is hand this card in along with your other cards, and an extra \$5 will be added to your bill, and you pay it.' Okay.

So that was our next move. We're going to physically put a pledge card, as it were, into everyone's hand. And I thought, standing there looking around, saying, yeah, you know, when somebody rings your doorbell and says, 'They're starving in Africa, would you give three bucks for African famine relief?' You say to yourself, 'How many of my neighbors are home? How many of them would give? You know, this guy here has got to get paid.' The chances that this will actually achieve anything are practically zero. So we don't give. But maybe when we can see, by the very nature of the project, that it could succeed. So we just did the math. There are 30,000 of us, if enough of us gave we could make a dent five times 30,000 you know, do the math.

Well, I stood by the cashiers because I believe in not having just ideas, but checking out how they work. I stood and I looked, and what I saw was something very interesting. People really read that card, and then they looked around, and then they looked on the floor, where there were a lot of those cards, and then they threw their card on the floor. So this is where we turn this, because I've given this particular little lecture, I'm afraid, way too many times. I turned it into a Socratic dialogue. So now you've been hearing a little bit, even though you weren't born at the

time, but you've been hearing a little bit about those days. So I'm going to ask you to guess how many of the 30,000 students gave \$5.

KN: Oh, no.

DE: Yeah, come on, just make a wild guess, just some number between zero and 30,000.

KN: One hundred.

DE: Well, it was a little better than that. It was 1200, but that was \$6,000, again, you know, not much money. Everybody was very discouraged, but I said, 'No, no, no, no, no, a new thought has occurred to me.' And I said, 'I saw people seriously considering it. They didn't just stomp on it. Nobody acted angry. They looked around and it's the old futility factor. What's going on here is everyone is saying, I am the last altruist. Everyone else is an asshole, but I'm not, and no one's going to join me in this worthy cause. So what's my point in getting involved? I'll just be out money, but nothing will really happen.' I said, 'What if we turned it around and apathy would land on the side of the angels?'

So the very next semester, the exact same people got a very similar card that said, this is a referendum on a refundable fee. We have the shortage of financial aid. What if we collected \$2 from every student every semester, and you had a month to get it back if you felt like it, and all you had to do was show up with your ID card at the administration building, and they'll hand you two bucks and punch your ID card. But we—the proceeds would be used for your [unclear] classmates and a few other things. We're going to do this, we're going to challenge—this isn't really our problem, it's the state's problem, but they're not meeting it, so we'll challenge them to match the amount of money that we contribute. And you've got three choices on this ballot. Choice number one: yes, if this referendum passes, I definitely will not get a refund. No, I can't promise you I won't get a refund, but it's okay with me if you collect the money and hold it for a month. No, I don't want this to happen at all. Within the first one, which is yes, not only do I like this idea, but I myself wouldn't seek a refund. There were two sub-questions you got to ask. Should we do this whether or not the state matches us this year, but only this year, or should we demand matching first before we ever collect? Okay, now, once again, out of 30,000 people, how many people filled out the ballot?

KN: Fifteen thousand.

DE: Twenty thousand. Twenty thousand, two thirds. Of the 20,000, how many checked the first box? Now, remember, 1200 people actually gave money the previous fall. We're now saying no money now, but it's a referendum. If it passes, you will have to pay in the fall. How many people would check the first box? Yeah, I want it, and I will leave my money in.

KN: Fifteen thousand.

DE: Well, 10,279.

KN: Wow.

DE: Saying, 'Yes, I not only am for it, but I'd leave my money in.' Now, the second one was, I can't promise that I'll leave my money in, but it's okay with me, if you collect it. How many people checked that one?

KN: Well, I guess that would be 10,000.

DE: Well, that'd be nobody saying no.

KN: Oh, that's true, right.

DE: Turned out it was about 5,000. And 5,000 said no. But if you take 10,279, a number I'm never going to forget, and the 5,000—the number is not exactly 5,000, that number I did forget—and you add them together, it was more than half of the entire student body, with a third of them not voting. Now, Jack Peltason didn't want that referendum. He didn't want me to do that, and he vetoed it. But I went over his head to David Henry, the President of the university, and I said, 'Jack's objection is, what if only a handful of people vote? You have a majority, but it's a tiny fraction of the student body. He doesn't want to have another reason for windows to be broken.' That season, we had \$20,000 worth of broken windows. I mean, there were real riots that year. That was getting hot.

What I did was I negotiated with George Barge, who was assistant to David Henry. And George, I have to say, was one of the most remarkably unseen, unheralded, wise people at the university in those days. He was an assistant to President Henry. He was practically invisible. He didn't have a fancy title. He was Assistant to the President. But George knew everything that was going on, and he was smart, and he was down at the—and he, I had talked him into putting Paul Schroeder on the centennial convocation speaker list, and Paul had stood up there and talked about what a crappy education. And so George had been burned, I suppose you could say by at least one of my projects, not that long earlier, but George saw the point of what—I said, 'George, we will not seek this fee if we don't have a resounding success. I promise you that. Nobody's going to try to advance this because it would, if it isn't popular, we're not going to do it.' But I thought we really had it.

And you know, that was in the middle of riots, and the governor saw the headlines that students at the University of Illinois, who are on the one hand, protesting tuition increases and smashing windows over the war and so forth, had voted a fee onto themselves to help their need, their neediest classmates. And he invited SEAL to come and visit him. So we went to Springfield, and I didn't know the man. I mean, he was a Republican, I was a Democrat, and he had a famously wooden face because he'd been injured in World War II, and the scar tissue made it impossible for him to smile. Anyway, we were ushered into the governor's office, and we sat waiting for him. And on the table there was a box about twice as big as this one, filled with rubble, chunks of stuff. And the Capitol Building was under reconstruction at the time, and so when the governor came in, said hello, to break the ice, I said, 'Governor, we've been sitting here looking at this interesting box of stuff on your table. What's that?' And he said, 'Those are things that were thrown at my state police last weekend by students at Southern Illinois University.' Ooh. Well, okay, you know.

So then we sat down and talked, and I said, 'Governor, we really think that the scholarship commission is all very fine, but it only helps with tuition fees. What's really keeping people from college is the cost of room, board, books and travel. And the state might think about how it spends money on higher education better. But anyway, we're raising money for the kids who have trouble paying those other costs. Most of them have scholarship commission tuition waivers. They qualify for them, but what they don't qualify for is help with the other costs. And will the state match us?' And he said, 'Well, frankly, I like your project, but I have a Board of Higher Education. They are the people who make budget recommendations, and you have to persuade them, and it's a little bit late in the budget cycle.' But he said, 'As far as I'm concerned, this is great idea, but I don't make those decisions.' [Whispers] Unlike Donald Trump, this counts of anybody great genius.

Ogilvie was a wonderful man, and as I say, not more than a year and a half later, I was working for him, but that hadn't happened yet. So we came back, and I did meet with James Holderman, who was later brought up on charges for sexually abusing male students after he became president of, I don't know some university on the East Coast. I never liked James Holderman. Anyway, Holderman was an asshole, and his father was a big judge in Chicago. He was very active in Chicago politics, and a disgusting man. I knew it then, and I wasn't surprised later on when he got his comeuppance. But anyway, Holderman said, 'Nah, we're not going to do that.'

And so there was an editorial in *The Daily Illini*, written by Roger Simon, who, I think now writes for the *National Journal*. No, he was writing for *Time* or *Newsweek*. Anyway, Roger now is lacking a leg. He's a good friend of Dan Balz, who you will see on *Washington Week*. He's, he's chief correspondent for *The Washington Post*, and had been *Daily Illini* editor during the centennial year. So these are national quality journalists back when we had good people writing for *The Daily Illini* with whom I worked in those days. Anyway, Roger wrote an editorial saying, 'nice guys.' And then that was one editorial. And it turns out 'nice guys finish last: there's that Eisenman who, who believes in channels and trusts people, and he ran this referendum, and now he's been trumped on and the state isn't going to match it, and the whole thing comes to nothing. And see, that's what that's what happens when you try to be nonviolent and nice,' you know? And the other editorial was entitled 'Union Jack,' and it was all about how Jack Peltason, by not being responsive to student demands, is causing all of the violence on campus, all the broken windows.

Well, in the first place, factually, he was wrong, because among those 10,279 people who said they were going to leave their money in, it was something like three to one in favor of 'we would collect the first year, even if the state didn't match us.' So the program wasn't dead. It was going to happen. So the editorial was factually wrong. Well, I stewed about that all day. I read that paper in the morning and late in the afternoon, and I thought I'd go over and just chat with *The Daily Illini*'s editor, and his—I can see the fellow, but his name is escaping me. Don Hundley. Hundley. I think I've got it right, something like that. I'm close. So I'm on the way to *The Daily Illini*, and I meet Hundley coming out of the Illini Union. So I'm walking with him, and I said, 'You know that editorial today in the first place was factually incorrect. And secondly,

I don't like the tone of it,' you know? And he said, 'Well, you know, I, now that you explain it to me, I agree with you. We shouldn't probably have published that.'

So we're walking in Illini—*The Daily Illini* used to be in the basement of Illini Hall. So we just walked past Regent Gregory's grave, crossed Wright Street. We went down the steps into the, into the place, and as we arrived, somebody said something to Hundley, and he turned his back on me, and I entered into what I've been told later is a fugue state. I don't remember my feet touching the floor, but I drifted right over. I used to spend evenings down there writing about things that were going on in the centennial era. I knew that place inside and out. I knew where the men were setting the type, and it was old fashioned type being set and lead plates printing on big presses in those days. So I went to where the Coke bottles were, and I got a Coke bottle, and I walked over and I threw it through the window of *The Daily Illini*. That's a basement window that was maybe this size, three feet wide and a foot and a half high. So there's this great crash, and everybody looks, and I say, 'The cause of this broken window was the in—the nonresponsiveness of *The Daily Illini* to projects of students that are of a constructive nature.' In other words, you could write an editorial about why windows are broken. Well, I'm breaking yours, and I'm telling you why it's getting broken.

And Roger Simon came out. Of course, he was there. And I said, 'So Roger, you know, now, now you can interview somebody about why he broke your window. You got the facts wrong. You didn't listen to us. You went off on your own. You know, this is what happens.' Five days later, I got, I think it was Gregory Hall, and I announced that I was giving a lecture. 'Why, on the night of,' and I named the date, 'I threw a bottle through the window of *The Daily Illini*.' And Roger originally agreed—oh, you think you have that one there? Oh!

KN: [Crosstalk.] I've seen that somewhere.

DE: Great, great, great, great, great.

KN: Maybe that was, was that recorded?

DE: Oh, you know, [crosstalk] yes, you might! And I'd forgotten. That's right, there was an, I think I had a, I think, in fact, the recorder sat on the empty chair where Roger Simon decided not to show up. [Nichols laughs.] But, you know, a couple of hundred people showed up—

KN: Wow.

DE: —faculty and students, and I just simply told the story. [Laughs.] I had fun in those days, I have to say. Well, the following fall, I had given up on the University of Illinois. I wrote a long essay about how to finance higher education, why low tuition was not the way to go, why we are now in an era, given the family income distribution we're facing, given the change in college going rates, we would be better off to raise tuition, have the state money go into supporting not institutions, but students who needed help, and we might end up actually spending less money and getting more kids total going to college if we redirected the state support for higher education. I wrote a long paper along those lines. I gave it to President Henry. He read it. He took me aside and said, 'Now, Mr. Eisenman, I've been in higher education all of my life, and

low tuition, the low tuition principle has served public higher education well, and it's not time to abandon it.' I thought, 'Oh god, you know, he hasn't heard a thing I've said.'

So I gave up. I said, 'I'm leaving. I'm leaving.' I packed everything into a U-Haul trailer. Well, I didn't do that until after—I hung around the summer because I wanted to see the first collection of the SEAL fee, but in September of 19—has to have been, okay, '67-'68, '68-'69, um '69-'70, has to have been the September of '70. I was going to leave Champaign forever, so I went to the—we registered in September, as usual. I went to the Armory and I watched and um, I stood right by the by the cashiers, and I had a sign. I said, if you're having trouble paying your SEAL fee, see me. Because students, the one thing we said was everyone pays this fee, even people with complete tuition waivers. So people who had gone to the Armory thinking that they would not have to pay anything because they had an ISSC award.

Now, the interesting thing about General Assembly tuition waivers is they didn't cover fees, just tuition. And fees were beginning to be significant, maybe an \$150 a semester to pay for the Illini Union and dorms and athletic association, whatever was the fee structure in those days. So people with waivers had to pay fees, but people with scholarship commission awards mostly didn't have to pay anything. So they, there were people I knew who would be coming through there would suddenly discover they had to pay \$2 and might not even have \$2 in their pocket. So I simply had tons of one-dollar bills in my pocket, and I was going to lend money to anybody. I didn't want anybody to be pissed off about this fee, but everybody had to pay it, and then they had, I think, six weeks to get refunds. Okay. So I stood there, and I think I gave away \$186 or something like that. By the way, nobody ever repaid me. They got a slip of paper saying you can send it to me later. Nobody ever did. But so what? I was happy to do it. But I watched it and the refund, the refund rate I found out later, after, I mean, I was in touch, I left, I really did, and I'll tell you about that. But the refund rate, I think, was less than 10% so 90% left their money in.

KN: Wow.

DE: Okay. Now, another feature of that referendum was that every four years, it had to be renewed. I never wanted any student who paid that fee to fail to have a chance to vote it down. So there was to be a referendum every four years, and the same question would be before them. Do we want a fee? And I can leap forward. In fact, let me tell you the story of SEAL and finish it up completely. I won't get to why I was back on campus a year later, but I was. I went away in September. I came back the following June, having given up on Champaign forever. I've never left after the, after June of 1971. [Nichols laughs.] So my, my escape didn't work. But I did go to Massachusetts, and I watched the waves on Buzzards Bay all winter, and subscribed to *The Daily Illini*.

And some time in the spring, maybe March, maybe no, it would have been February. Once again, there was an editorial about, 'Oh, they're thinking of raising tuition, and this will drive away the poor.' And I wrote a letter to the editor, I wrote an op-ed piece entitled, 'So what if tuition goes up?' And I pointed out that no one in the lower half of the Illinois family income distribution attending the University of Illinois was paying one cent of tuition. In those days, anybody whose income was below, okay, this is 1970, below 10,000 a year was paying any

tuition. The Illinois State Scholarship Commission, ISSC, completely covered tuition and fees for anybody in the lower income half. And a high percentage of the people in the next quarter got partial tuition waivers, full or partial. So the fact of the matter was, it was only people in the top 25% of the state of Illinois who would probably be affected by that tuition increase. I said, 'You're fighting the wrong battle. What's keeping people out of here is not tuition. We have, we have a lot of support for tuition for people who can't pay it. What we don't have is enough support for room, board, books and travel.'

Now the Federal Pell Grants Program was just getting started, and Jack had, I think, a million bucks from the federal government to help out that first year with SEOP. They were just beginning to invent the Pell Grants and now the federal government does put money into college kids, but they hadn't done that before. This was very new in the late '60s. There had been national defense student loans, which later became national direct student loans. I had a national defense student loan at Harvard, and I had to promise to be loyal to the government of the United States in order to get it. All right.

Anyway, four years went by. I'm back at the university. We won't talk at the moment about how I got back. But anyway, four years went by. It was 1970 what would it be? If it was, oh, yeah, the first referendum was in the spring of '70? Yes. Okay, so then in '74 it was time to have a new referendum. Everybody had forgotten that we're supposed to have a referendum. In the meantime, the refund rate had gone down. It was three or 4% we, I mean, everybody was leaving the SEAL money in and, and by then, I was working for the state. And oddly enough, once I was in the governor's office, matching money showed up. So kids were contributing \$4 a year. The state was contributing four that was eight, eight times 90% of 30,000 is 27, times eight, okay? Eight sevens are 56, eight twos are 16. We were getting \$200,000 a year. You know, nice money, not bad.

So time is up. It's time for a referendum, and everybody's forgotten about it. So I go to the head of the Undergraduate Student Association and the Graduate Student Association and the Chancellor, and the [unclear] students. And everybody says, 'Oh, oh, that hasn't got a prayer of passing. For one thing, everybody's cynical now. You know, the war is over. Nixon has resigned. Everybody's out for himself. People are greedy. That was '60s idealism, not a prayer. And worse than that, we no longer register in the Armory. You can't put a ballot in everybody's hand, because now we register by mail. And so how are you going to even have a referendum?' And I said, 'Well, why don't we add it to student government elections?' And they said, 'Well, only a handful of people show up for those.' I said, 'Well, if it's the best we've got, it's best we've got.'

So I reach into my pocket and take full page heads in *The Daily Illini* saying, 'Have you seen this program, SEAL? You know what it is. We have to vote on it again, and the vote will be at student government election time.' Then, because I believe in survey research, I'm walking down the street and I meet people that I know, and I say, 'Hey, you. How would you like to help raise a million bucks and it's going to take two hours out of your life?' And they said, 'Well, it sounds like a nice, you know, reward ratio to effort and time.' So I assembled a group of, I don't know, six of us, and we took the student directory and chose the second person up from the bottom of the left-hand page, and that was our sample of people to call on the phone. And they—it's the

student directory, so it's grads and undergrads. So the question was, we're doing a little survey to find out about an issue that's going to come up during student government elections. Do you know what the SEAL program is? So they answered yes or no. If they knew yes, we said, 'Well, then you understand that it is, we collect money for our neediest classmates.' If they didn't know what it was, we went into a little more detail. Then we said, 'Do you think you will vote at student government elections, which are coming up on April 3,' whatever it was, and they'd say yes or no. And then we said, 'If you do vote, do you think you'll vote to keep SEAL going or to kill it?'

And the results of our polling were that people who knew what it was and were going to vote were something like four to one in favor of keeping it going, and people who didn't know what it was and didn't think they were going to vote were two to one in favor of keeping it. But there was no stratum, undergrad or grad, no level of ignorance or apathy. There was no group that was going to vote it down. So all we had to do was get a get out the vote campaign, and we knew we would win. And you know, the result was exactly what it was four years earlier, three to one, 15. Well, three to one in favor of keeping it going. And more people voted on the SEAL fee than bothered to vote for student government.

KN: Interesting.

DE: We actually got a bigger turnout than the election that we were, that—and we did that. Let's see. So that would have been '74, '78, it was either '78 or '82 that the country had entered a period of rapid inflation. Mortgage interest rates, for example, were now up to 12, 14% because consumer prices were zooming up. We had real inflation in the late '70s, early '80s, under Reagan and it continued roaring up until the '90s, but by then, I was on the Illinois Student Assistance Commission. In fact, I joined it when it was still the Illinois State Scholarship Commission. I became its vice chair within the first year of being on it. But I was watching costs and government budgets very carefully by then. But of course, I'd been in the governor's office back in the '72, '72 era, '71-'72 I was only there about a year.

Anyway, it was either '78 or '82 that I said, you know, \$2 isn't buying what it used to buy, and tuition has gone up, and our need, if anything, for financial aid, is growing because the scholarship commission is coming under pressure. It used to be the case, hard to believe, that if the scholarship commission ran out of money, if more students applied and were found eligible for grants than the appropriation, the General Assembly always gave us a supplementary appropriation. We were fully funded up through 1984. There was never any budgeting. If you were entitled to a complete tuition and fee waiver, you got it—or not waiver, grant.

So I said we should consider raising the fee from \$2 to \$4. And again, I assembled—there wasn't any group called SEAL in between referendum. I mean, there wouldn't be anything to do. So, you know, it was a group that was ad hoc each time. Again, I got a bunch of people together. Again, we phoned people. Again, we asked them the same questions. Do you know what it is? Will you be voting? Would you vote to keep it or kill it? And then we added the question. We also are going to have a question this year, should we double the fee from two to \$4. And believe it or not, that one started failing. People are saying, 'No, we shouldn't double the fee.' So then we said, 'Why are you—you already said that, as far as you're concerned, it ought to

keep going, but you don't want to double the fee. Why are you saying that?' And they said, 'Well, because I think the only reason it works is the amount is so small that isn't worth it to people to go get their refund.' So again, every person thinks, 'I'm the last generous person. I'm giving because I believe in it, but all the others are just lazy assholes.'

KN: Right.

DE: What a lesson in the lack of leadership. Nobody's saying, you are good people. You can't believe you're surrounded by good people. If you do something that just takes a little bit from all of us, guess what? You'll be joined by a lot of people. But it taught me a lesson. You have to show by the very nature of the thing you're doing, that it's likely to succeed, and a refundable fee, is what Cass Sunstein wrote a book many, many years later, explaining, he calls it the nudge. You set up a system in which, by default, you're going to do the right thing. You have to opt out of it, not into it. Now, Social Security is of that nature. Everybody's going to be old. Some of us are going to be disabled before we're old. Some of us are disabled from the day we're born. How do families take care of their elderly and disabled people? Well, basically, the rest of us sacrifice to keep somebody comfortable or at least not starving, or at least in a home. If we know there's a life cycle, if we know a certain fraction of us in our family are going to be old and infirm and not have been able to amass huge sums of money, one way to deal with it is not to try to find an investment which will take my \$1 and luckily turn it into a million, but instead, just plan ahead and have a little tax on every dollar we earn from the time we start earning.

You—do you know that the Social Security Administration, everybody talks about, 'Oh, the trust fund is going to run out of money.' Do you know how much is in the trust fund? If we stopped the payroll tax tomorrow, how long could Social Security pay its retirees without running out of cash? Take a wild guess.

KN: No idea.

DE: Take a wild guess.

KN: A hundred years.

DE: Ha! Uh, four years [Nichols laughs] and when we repaired it under Reagan, it was down to three months. Now, it's a lot of money, it's billions of dollars, but then there are a lot of people getting—what we're doing is we're collecting money from everybody who's working, and that money flows, almost all of it, right back out to everybody who's retired. We don't have to guess at future inflation rates. We don't have to figure out which bonds and stocks are going to grow or track. There's no game of we're putting money aside, and it's going to grow, but everybody sinks. And unfortunately, the way Social Security is presented to the world, you think you have your own money that you've paid in all these years, which is invested with somebody and has grown. No! It's a pay as you go system. The big fat fight we're having over Illinois pensions is a fight we need to have, because we've promised more than we collect, and Social Security does not promise more than it collects. It's meant not to keep you on easy street, but to put a little hammock underneath you. That's all. Nobody gets more than 30,000 a year from Social Security,

but a former vice president of the University of Illinois gets 500,000 a year from a series of state pensions that he qualified for by having different jobs, all of which add to each other. So state pensions, unfortunately, for U of I faculty and state retirees, aren't meant to be safety nets. They're meant to be golden parachutes for having earned less than the private sector might have paid you. So we have a problem here, but, but paying as you go is a damn good way to go.

All right, why did I bring that up? Well, that—another one of my little lectures happens to be on the subject of Social Security, but it's, but it's coming up with systems that everybody participates in, in an affordable way, and that solve a problem that everybody has. But it requires everybody participating. Do you know that that Barack Obama cut the payroll tax, he, he purposely lowered the amount going into Social Security as a way of dealing with the economic crash of 2008. And yet, the Social Security Administration didn't draw down anything from the trust fund during those years of the payroll tax being cut. We had less income, but we still met the needs of retirees just out of the interest paid on the trust fund, plus the new money coming in from people who were employed. But you need a buffer. You need a trust fund, not because it's earning huge sums that make up for small contributions, but because obviously, at a time when a lot of unemployment hits, people aren't earning money and they're not paying the payroll tax because they're not on the payroll, so income will go down in economic downturns, but you don't want to cut off the old people at that time, so you draw temporarily on the trust fund and—but you're limited to a buffer of at most a couple of years. Well, it's not as if you're going to stop the payroll tax. The buffer actually is always good for 10 years.

Now, people planning ahead say, if we don't make some adjustments yet, 10 years from now, that trust fund would be back to zero, which it got to in the '80s. We have 10 years to figure out what to do, and the easiest thing in the world to do is just tax more income. Do you know that nobody pays a single cent of Social Security tax on anything above \$130,000 a year? But our argument is, since, since nobody gets more than 30,000 or whatever the number is, the richest person in America who pays on that whole 130,000 is never going to get more than about 30,000 a year from Social Security. I have earned far less than the average American my age and with my education, and yet, by waiting to age 70, I get 22,000 a year from Social Security. But it's a compression. Very low-income people get more than they would ever be—have been able to save money for if they had been in some kind of private system. But rich people, by definition, don't need much of a safety net anyway. So.