

University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives**Voices of Illinois****Interviewee: Fred Turner****Interviewer: Jennifer Johnson****July 25, 1967****Length: 29:25**

John E. Corbelly: This is John E. Corbelly, President of the University of Illinois. The historical recording you are about to hear was made in 1967, the centennial year of the University. It was made one year before one of our most respected administrators officially retired after a 50-year career totally at the University of Illinois. During his five decades at the University, from 1918 to 1968, Fred H. Turner was a student, alumnus, and administrator. He served eight university presidents and thousands of students. He was dean of men and later dean of students. He counseled students effectively over a period marked by substantial changes in the relationship between universities and their students. Turner's central concern was always with the welfare of the student, which made Fred Turner one of the greatest assets the university ever had. The following conversation by Dr. Turner is taken from the University Archives Oral History Collection. It is a memorable record of the personality of Fred Turner and of his dedication to the University of Illinois.

Fred Turner: The first time I ever met Dean Clark was in his office. I came up to the campus from Tuscola, which was my hometown, in the summer of 1918, and went to his office in the administration building to get some information from him about where does one apply for a job, because I'm going to have to do some work. I might say, incidentally, that on that first visit, I had been on the campus before on two or three occasions, but not on any official visit, but I got off the Illinois Central train at the station, and at that time the station was at street level, and the streetcar then left Illinois Central Station and came to Illinois Field and south to the Administration Building on Wright Street. except that there was a streetcar strike going on and I didn't know this and cars weren't running so I waited a long time and no streetcar came so I asked how to get to the campus and they told me to go down University Avenue and I came to the baseball field and then turned south and I'd come to it and that's the way I got to the campus. And I went to Dean Clark's office in the administration building. This must have been the month of July and had no trouble at all in seeing him. He was a...he was a small, rather dapper man in a big office, it seemed to me. He was a big desk in the administration building. And he was quite friendly, although not overly so. He wasn't any fussy. He was just a pleasant, interested individual to talk to. And he asked me what I wanted, and I told him, he gave me the answer, told me what to do, and that was about all there was to it. I left for the impression that he was interested in what my problem was and that he solved it. He told me what to do and gave me a good quick answer to it and moved me along and saw someone else. As I thought about it, I

thought about it at the time, as I recall this, it seemed to me I was in and out of the place very quickly. It didn't take long to get the thing handled. And this was typical of the man. He could get the work done and be through with it, and that was that.

I didn't really have much of any contact with him until I began to work for him, which was, this was in July of 1918, and I was just out of high school. I began working as a clerk in the clerk's office. So that's the way I started, just as a clerk in the office, 10 cents an hour, which was the minimum wage for a beginner, and the highest priced man in the office happened to be Anthony James Dinata, who later came to the university, came back to the university and was secretary of the board for many years and was just retired. But he was the chief clerk in the office, and I was the most lowly clerk in the office beginning in December of 1918. Then I worked for Ian Clark throughout my undergraduate career. He had quite an interesting policy. in that he hired. He had one girl working for him as a secretary, and all the rest of his office helped, were all students, except the full-time assistants, and he had just one assistant. That was in the first year I was here, it was Rav Wenock, who left to go to Penn State as dean, and never did come back, although Dean Clark expected him to come back. And then later he had another man, a man named Horace Garman. I worked just as an ordinary clerk in the office, and this is straight clerk who worked bookkeeping and recordkeeping of various plans, student attendance records, and all types of records that were kept in the dean's office. And I saw very little of him in the first two years because I dealt with the chief clerks. There were three or four older men that were the chief clerks, and they dealt with Dean Clark and they dealt with the chief clerks. Well, at the end of two years, I became the chief clerk in the office. And when I became the chief clerk, then I saw a great deal of Dean Clark. And so I'm regularly until I graduated in 1918, or 1922, rather. I came in 1918, graduated in 1922. And then, of course, I stayed with him after that. I graduated as a pre-med student and had expected to go to medical school in the fall of 1922. But in the summer of 1922, Dean Clark had invited Arthur Ray Warnock, who had been his assistant, and who had gone to Pennsylvania State College, it was at that time, as dean. He invited Ray to come back and be the associate dean. And Dean Clark had in mind that he was going to begin to turn some things over to Ray and ease off some on his homework.

Well, at the last minute, Mr. Warnock didn't come back. He notified the dean that Penn State had made such an offer to him that he didn't feel that he could turn it down, so he was going to stay at Penn State. So Dean Clark asked me in August, said, would you want to postpone going to medical school for a year at least and help me out in this emergency because I don't have anyone I want to put in as an assistant to take the place that Ray was going to take. Would you stay one extra year and do this work? And I said, "I wondered over some and agreed I would do it." And along sometime in the later part of the latter part of the fall, he called me in one day and said, now if you're interested in doing this and changing your whole plan, well, I'd be glad to have you stay with me and be an assistant dean. And I would hope that maybe you'd be prepared to take over the work when I'm through with it. as being a man. Well, I thought that was a good idea, and he did put one [unintelligible] on it, though, the [unintelligible] being that you must do your

graduate work, and I'd like to have you finish up your doctorate degree before I retire, which would be in 1931. See, your Dean Clark was scheduled to retire. So I stayed with him as an assistant dean. and worked for him for, well, got a master's degree in 1926, and then got him a doctorate in '31. He retired in '31, and I succeeded him as Dean Man in '31.

But I had a chance to know him very well. I think there are a great many folk tales about Dean Clark that are largely fairy stories. I don't know how many men have told me that Dean Clark called him in and told him, if the 6.15 leaves at 6.15, you better be on it. And he never, I never did hear him say that to anybody in his whole life. This is just one of those stories. And they grow as time goes on. There have been many stories that he couldn't have known all the things that he knew about students and students' lives and students' activities if he didn't have some spies written to him. And this is pure bunk. All he did was keep his eyes open and listen carefully. And he I think the best example of that I ever saw was the president of fraternity coming in and telling the dean the activities of a couple of freshmen that I had before in detail and then asking the dean to get these two freshmen in and read them the riot act and then send them on their way, which the dean did, and I'm quite sure those freshmen simply could not have concluded anything except that This man couldn't have known all this if he hadn't had some spies, going on his spy. It was the president of their own house that came in to tell the bee to know about it, and then he didn't have, the president of the house didn't have any further trouble with these two boys.

But he was a very sharp man, intellectually. He was active in many things. He was, being Clark was a clever man. He wrote, wrote an awful lot. He wrote and sold. He sold the OIA, and he sold the American Magazine, which was then being published. I wrote several books that had pretty good sale. And he was a sharp investor for a man who started—he started with nothing. And when he—over the last ten years of his life, he was a very sharp investor. He made quite a little money and left a sizable estate for a man who never made very much money at any time in his life. He was a very kind man. Too kind, really. He was soft as far as money. I mentioned he was sharp financial, but at the same time, he gave way as much as he made. I don't really know how much money the dean actually did give to students just out of his own pocket. He had some loan funds, but he often needed money. And right now, to help students, he'd take it out of his pocket and give it to them. If he got it back, well, that was fine. And if he didn't, he didn't pursue it at all. On the other hand, it always annoyed him if he loaned money to a student, and the student didn't repay him. This was a check against that man. He didn't forget these things. But I think, generally, his experience was pretty good on that, too.

He did everything he could to know students and to get acquainted with them. You hear stories today about his fabulous memory on names. Well, people forget the fact that he always had an introduction slip that was brought in to him. If someone came to the office, he was intercepted at the door and the slip was brought in saying who he was. And the numbers, of course, weren't as great as they are now. But the dean studied records and he had methods of his own, of memory tricks. He made relations with where they were from and who their people were and who their

relatives were and friends that they might have in common. Any trick that he could use as a memory trick he used. And he did have a fabulous ability to remember names. He'd meet people on the street and call them by name and shock them right out of their shoes because he could call them by name after very short contact with them. And this was part of his business. But he had ways of knowing people, too.

Dean Clark was largely responsible for getting a university hospital of any kind. And as soon as he got the thing into operation and hit daily, he made the rounds and visited everybody in the hospital. And even after we had McKinley Hospital in this larger place. He still regularly visited the hospital, and he'd go in and visit around with people in there, and of course, the boy of the sick appreciates a call of that kind as much as anyone does. He, for years, was always present if a student had to have an operation at the hospital. He'd go and stand by with the doctors until it was done, and then call up your folks and tell them you've been there, and this was what the condition was. These were personal tricks. They call them—I use the word tricks when I use it for advice, and these were gimmicks to... to get to know people and have contacts with them. And certainly he used everyone that you can think of.

The first convocation that I ever attended on the campus here was right after we'd been inducted into the military service. And then we met in the auditorium with these privates in the RND and all the students at the same time we met in the auditorium. And who was there? was President Kinley, President James was still the president of the university, but he was in Washington, and Dr. Kinley was vice president. He was there. On the platform was the colonel who was in charge of the army, Dr. Kinley, George Huff, and Dean Clark. Those were the four people on the stage. When the big flu epidemic broke out here on the campus, and during that fall, I had it and was had been moved out of the army where most of us were living. I'd been moved into one of the fraternity houses and being missing from the role, Dr. Beard came to the room that I was in and who was with him? George Huff. They were out checking on people. And I lived in Tuscola, so immediately they said, well, we'll just arrange to send you home. You don't live far away. We'll send you home and Dean Clark someplace was in the neighborhood. The three of them were out. Dr. Beard, who was the director of the health service and and George Huff and Dean Clark were the people that were working on this. In other words, he was director of athletics, but at the same time, he was a personnel officer, too. But more than that, these men were the University of Illinois. They were all faculty members in their own rights. Dr. Beard was a professor of physiology, and Mr. Huff, while he was the director of athletics, also did some teaching, too. And these were highly respected men. This, I think, is part of their greatness. They were part of the backbone of the institution. But they'd all derived from academic interests, rather, than from personal interests.

I never did really know President James, although he was still the president when I came, and I saw him on several occasions before he left and Dr. Kinley became the president. Mr. James, as you know, came here from Northwestern. He was a professor of political science, and he followed President Draper. And Draper's great field had been administration. It had been Draper

who really put together the organization. Under Draper, this place became University up to that time. See, the first president went through, as Gregory, he went through the difficult days of getting started, and he was followed by Peabody, who was a fine engineer. and a poor president, although he accomplished some fine things. But when Peabody retired in 1891 and went to Philadelphia to work for the World Exposition there, Peabody left us with about as good an engineering college as there was in the country, at least certainly in the Midwest. He let agriculture run down pretty badly, and he'd let liberal arts run down pretty badly, but he left a good engineering college And then Burrell, that's T.J. Burrell, Burrell Avenue and all that. Burrell became the acting president for three years, from '91 to '94. Well, he, Burrell, they tried very hard to get him to be the president, I'm told, but he wouldn't do it. He merely wanted to be the professor and the holding man until they could get someone else.

But Burrell changed a good many things. For example, Under Gregory and under Peabody, students were forbidden to have fraternities, sororities, and organizations of that character. The minute Peabody left, Burrell went right to the Board of Trustees, said, let's change this. Let's let fraternities and sororities come. Let's welcome them here, bring them in, and let's let other student organizations and activities begin to be a part of the university, because I think we'll have a better student body and a happier student body if we do. And Burrell also began to strengthen the liberal arts college, because he was a liberal arts man, and get it back into a little better shape. Then when Draper came, Draper had come from the city schools of Cleveland, where he had been superintendent and very successful. And Draper took this institution as a growing place, and he added, of course, he added the colleges of medicine and dentistry and pharmacy. and library science and graduate school and law school all came into being under Draper. And Draper was really a businessman. Maybe he wasn't much of an educator, but he was a good administrator. And he left the place so well organized that I'm told that there are business principles that were put in by Draper when he was the president here. They're still just as firm and as solid today, and they're still being used. Maybe the details have been changed, but the principles stand just as Draper put them in.

Well, then he was followed by James. And James, whereas Draper had been the administrator, James was a scholar. He had a fine reputation as president of Northwestern, and taking this solid foundation of organization that Draper had built, And then putting James in as the next president was really a pretty happy arrangement, because James came in with a pre-setup organization that was set to go for the time he was here. He didn't have to change hardly anything administratively. Instead, he worked on building the courses, building the curriculum, adding to the faculty. And of course, he had the World War blow up in his face, and that was a pretty upsetting thing. But James was the scholar, whereas Draper was the administrator. And I think if you would have to make a contrast then to move on to the Kinley regime, you would say that Kinley came nearer to combining the two than either Draper or James did. Because Kinley was a good administrator. He ran an off-site ship. Many people felt he was pretty much inclined to run the whole show himself, although I think it was just his scotch way of doing things. He was his scotchman, and

he was a highly respected professor of economics. This is one thing that had come in, and the James administration, Draper and James too, was a department of economics that went without a peer in the country for many years, because there was Kinley, and there was a whole series of men. that they had brought in who got to be the great man of the field. And we got graduate students from all over the world who came to study under them.

But Kinley ran the tight ship too, but in his own way. And I would say this for Kinley and James, try and compare them. James was a rather retiring individual. About the one thing that he would do that wasn't particularly retiring, he loved to ride horses. He'd ride around the campus on a handsome horse that he owned. But this was about as much as showing off as he ever did of any kind. But he was the most dignified and scholarly individual and gave a good impression as the president. And Kinley was the same way. Kinley was a little more of a showman, although he didn't mean to be. He, Kinley had one ability that I think no other president before him or since him had. He certainly had the confidence of the people of the state of Illinois. And he never did lose it. He got from the legislature a plan, a 10-year building plan, all these Georgian buildings on the south end, the library, the first year into the library, the new ag building, the new commerce building, the hospital, the first unit of the big natural resources building. Well, all these Georgian buildings that were done by Charles Platt were a part of this 10-year plan that President Kennedy got the legislature to agree to.

The homecoming was started in 1910. That was before I came, of course. It was underway, although the first year I was here, they didn't have any homecoming. This was in the war year. In fact, they played the game that was supposed to have been the homecoming game with no one present because the flu epidemic was in process and they played it locked the gates. The game was played on a long field. There wasn't anyone there. I watched it through the gates. I'd had this when this was over, and I went over and looked through the holes in the fence and watched the game play, but there wasn't anyone in the stands at all. But Homecoming started in 1910, and this, of course, was new here. Then Dad's Day started in 1920 and Mother's Day in 1921. And I was a student at the time both of those started. Of course, Dad's Day, now again, Dean Clark gets the credit for Dad's Day, having established it, and he never took that credit. He gave it to the Alpha Delta Phi fraternity, because the Alpha Deltas, about 1911 or 12, began inviting their dads to the campus, and they invited Dean Clark to come and be their speaker at their Dad's Day. They called it their Dad's Day Banquet, which he did. As long as he was active, he went there and made their speech. Well then, in 1920, he said to Dr. Kinley, Well, the Alpha adults have done this successfully. Let's try setting it up as a university affair and let's have a university dad's day. I was a student at the time and remembered very well indeed because I had my father here and the main event was on Saturday morning, which was a military review. We paraded the student brigade down Green Street for the dads to see it there and had a meeting and so on. But that was the start of Dad's Day.

Now Mother's Day, which came a year later, 1921, was of a different, it had started in a different way. When I came, 1918, there was an annual event which had been going on, which was staged

by the Women's Athletic Association, which was known as the May Fate. And this, the May Fate always took place on Friday before Interscholastic, and Interscholastic was the state high school track and field day. The women had the May Fate on Friday, and then the Interscholastic was on Saturday, and then Saturday night was the Interscholastic Circus, which was another event that was staged here on the campus, and was a pretty good circus held down at Illinois Field. But the May Fate was really a, oh, what do you call a show day for the girls to show what they'd accomplished in physical education. They had the Maypole and the dances, and and folk dances and things of this kind, and actually much of it was done right where we're sitting, because this was an area that was then called the Peach Orchard, which was just south of Lincoln Hall, and there were some peach trees in here. Over where the library is now was the sales room where they sold the peaches. This, the May fate gave way to Mother's Day, and what we know as Mother's Day today, of course, picked up the National Mother's Day, and we have it a week earlier. But our Mother's Day derives from our old WAA, Women's Athletic Association, may faith.

Founder's Day has been celebrated as long as we've had in the university, not as such. But this is involved even in the centennial today. March 2nd is the day when the first students were registered. March 2nd of 1868 was when the first students were registered, and matter of fact, when the centennial dates were first set up, You may remember the board set it as February 28, 1967 to March 2, 1968, which went from the day the university's bill was approved to locate here up to the day the first students were registered, and then they changed it to March 11. The reason being that the formal inauguration of the new institution was done on March 11 of 1868. Well, first students were registered on March 2 of 1868, about 50 of them. And then by March 11, that increased to 72. And this Founder's Day has been observed ever since as the birthday of the registration of the first students.

The first chief was a boy named Lester Lutweiler, whose father was head of the Department of Mechanical Engineering. You know, the big house over on...it's on Pennsylvania Avenue, just east of the United Church House of Pennsylvania, on the north side. Well, that's where the Lutweiler is. Professor Lutweiler had a son, Lester, who had been a great scout, Boy Scout. He'd been to Europe, one of the international gatherings of Boy Scouts for America, and was a great student of [unintelligible]. Well, at that time, under Mr. Harding, we also had an assistant band director, Ray, named Ray DeVort. And Ray has since been the director of bands at the University of Wisconsin, I expect you know him. Anyway, Ray and Les Lutweiler, Les had been a great student of Indian [unintelligible] while he'd been a Boy Scout, and Les and Ray worked out this business of building the uniform and doing the chief's dance at a football game, and they tried it once, and it was their...Les started this as a freshman in 1926, and he did it the...Well, it had been the fall of 1925, was his first one, and then he graduated in '29 and he was the first, he was the first one and served all four years. I think there's a picture with the [unintelligible] of Les in his uniform as the first chief. It caught on immediately and of course we've had it ever since without fail. In fact, even the war years we had a girl be the chief, as you may know, during World War

II. I think for two years we didn't have a man who could qualify. These are authentic Indian dances that they do, and Les got his from the Indians themselves. And the uniform, of course, is authentic. The uniformity is authentic. In fact, we're going to have to have a new one. The eagle feathers are wearing out on the present uniform, and they're going to be very hard to replace, hard to get. Eagles are getting scarce. But that's been a great tradition here, and I think Les and Ray get the... Les Lutweiler and Ray DeMark get the credit for that. I sometimes think that that the chief at the football games today gets bigger than everything else that happens on when he comes on between the halves.

Narrator: The late Fred Turner provided many University of Illinois students with meaningful work situations during his years of service as Dean of Men and Dean of Students. Today, students continue to work their way through school, just as perhaps you did at Illinois. These young people serve as researchers, clerical helpers, writer-editors, groundskeepers, activity supervisors, and much more. They work in the dean's office, Illinois Union, health services, and in the myriad of activities across the campus. The Fred H. Turner Memorial Fund was established to create a growing endowment that provides income to strengthen and expand the part-time work and learning opportunities available for students. The fund is a fitting memorial to Dean Turner's lifelong commitment to young people, and it is a source of personal satisfaction to fund subscribers who know that they are aiding in this unique means of student development.