University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives

Allen Hall and Unit One Oral History Project

Interviewee: Howard Schein

Interviewer: Spencer Bailey

November 15, 2024

Length: 02:03:12

Spencer Bailey: Record, alright. This is an oral history interview for the University of Illinois Archives, Unit One/Allen Hall Oral History project. My name is Spencer Bailey. I'm an archives research assistant here at the Student Life and Culture archives. The date today is November 15th, 2024. I'm pleased to be speaking with Dr. Howie Schein via Zoom. I believe he's in Champaign-Urbana, at his home, and I'm speaking from the Archives Research Center on the U of I campus. So, Dr. Schein, first of all, thank you very much for taking the…

Howard Schein: Call me Howie. No one calls me doctor and gets away with it.

SB: Alrighty, very good, Howie. Well, first of all, thank you very much for taking the time to speak with me today. And before I start asking questions, you were, so I make sure it is recorded at the beginning…You are the director emeritus of Unit One, is that right?

HS: Sure. Well, I don't know if I ever got the Emeritus official. I'm a former…I'm a former director.

SB: Former director. Okay, and how long…about how long were you the director for?

HS: I think 35 or 30…around 30 years.

SB: Okay, so a long, long time. Director of the community…All right, so, to begin, then, would you say your full name and where you're from?

HS: My full name is Howard Carl Schein, and I grew up in Chicago.

SB: What was growing up like for you?

HS: Well, I grew up in the real Chicago, in the city. And when I was born, actually, my father was in the service in World War II. I grew up in the Rogers Park neighborhood. Ironically, the final apartment building that my mother lived in was the same apartment building that Laura Haber grew up in. But we had no connection until we met at Illinois. Growing up was, you know, well, you don't know. I had a lot of fun growing up. I grew up in Chicago, and Chicago is incredibly neighborhood-divided. And Rogers Park at the time was basically half Catholic and half Jewish. So, the public schools were Jewish because the Catholic kids went to parochial school. And actually, I became friends with many of my Catholic friends when we met up in the park. There was a park in Rogers Park called Tobey Beach, which was the summer headquarters of the north side lifeguards, but year-round it was a park, and kids, now this is boys—girls didn't do this stuff…Boys hung out there. We became junior lifeguards, and when we became 16, we became lifeguards. And so that was one of the strong points of my growing up, and there was a guy there named Sam Leone, and now the park is known…named Leon Park. And he was the

figurehead. There's incredible allegiance to him even now that he's been dead for a long time. There are Facebook pages and all that kind of stuff. When I grew up, we were pretty free. We were pretty wheeling, we were…Saturday morning, for instance, I’d just leave the house, starting when I was eight years old, and come home at 5, and my mom didn't even ask me where I was. I can get on my bike and ride miles and miles. No one cared. I knew how to ride the CTA starting when I was 5. And my mom let me start doing it when I was around 8. And if we got lost, we'd make a phone call home.

SB: From a pay phone, of course.

HS: Oh, for sure. When I grew up, we actually had a party line in Chicago, not the [unintelligible]. We had a pay phone in the house. But we did just fine. My father was a professional musician. And my mother was a Chicago public school teacher. And she was a very active, progressive social activist, as well as being a school teacher. So, she was a founding member, 1 of 26 people who founded the Chicago Teachers Union, which is local on AFT Local 1.

SB: Oh, wow.

HS: And she…With her committee members, she established the Rogers Park Tenants Union. She wrote the Tenants' Bill of Rights that Harold Washington, Mayor of Chicago, adopted. Washington was the chief eulogizer at her funeral, and Studs Terkel wrote another eulogy. So, she was up there in activism in Chicago. And now there's a Rogers Park beach named after her.

SB: Is there, really?

HS: Yep.

SB: Oh, that's really great.

HS: Well, in the 50s, all the beaches on the north side from Hollywood to Evanston, except for a 40-block stretch, were privately owned, ready for development, and she led the successful community effort to have the city buy the beaches and make them into public beaches. And when my brother retired, he went on a [unintelligible] and got the beach named after her.

SB: What a legacy!

HS: And interestingly, it's the beach where she taught me to swim. And the beach I lifeguarded is the beach…one of the beaches, I mean, is right down the street. A very highly reputed U of I former professor lived up the street. And the guy that shot Lee Harvey Oswald lived off the street.

SB: Did you ever meet Jack Ruby?

HS: No.

SB: But he lived nearby?

HS: [He] lived about 5 blocks away and lifeguarded 2 blocks away, but I never met him. And there was a linguistic professor at UBI named RB Lees who got his degree at MIT, where linguistics was king at the time, and he grew up there, too. And I was classmates with Jan Schakowsky, who is the long, long time congressional rep from Evanston and Rogers Park, and

my mom and she worked together politically. So yeah…And my father's side of the family were all musicians. One of my great uncles with Chicago Symphony…And one of my great uncles represented Oscar Meyer and married one of the daughters.

SB: So blah blah blah.

HS: Yeah. So, I come from a Chicago history. Let's put it that way.

SB: I grew up in the Southwest suburbs, but both my folks were from the city, the South Side. So, I've grown up with stories and very similar things about, you know, leaving the house at X amount of time and just being home when the streetlights come on.

HS: Oh, you got it! When the streetlights come on, come home.

SB: So, what sort of place was Chicago like in the 50s?

HS: Well, for me, it was wide open. And I was street savvy enough to know what neighborhoods you don't go into. Well, let me give you a story. This is a funny one. Some time when I was about eight or nine years old, I had two buddies. One was Charlie Rosenblum, and his father owned this operation called Rose Records, which was one of the biggest record stores in downtown Chicago. This plays in. And the other was Larry Ellison, who is the 10th richest man, [one of the] top 10 rich guys in the world, he's Oracle Corporation. And the three of us…almost every Saturday, for a while, would get on the L and go downtown to Michigan Avenue. Where what is now the Intercontinental Hotel was a health club. And we just went in; we never got challenged. Charlie's uncle was a member or a former member. And we played basketball, shoot hoops, swim, eat lunch in the cafeteria. Then we go to Marshall Fields and play in the toy department, then go to Charlie's father's record store for ride home. This is what 8-year-olds did. My swim team was a YMCA on Wilson Avenue. I took the L to Wilson and took the bus further up to the Y. I started that when I was probably 10. There was access, you know, on rainy days we meet up with a bunch of friends and go to the Field Museum, because it was a dry place to play catch one-catch all. It wasn't a museum; it was a big, dry place. And the whole signature of all this was…It was all boys, because girls weren't involved in the meeting places, the parks that we had. Because on a lot of Saturdays we’d go to the park knowing that there is a field trip. If you got there by 9, you hopped in the pickup truck, and they took us somewhere. And this is like 13, 10-year-olds in the back of a pickup truck on the outer drive. This is like a whole different world.

SB: What sort of places would they take you to on the trips?

HS: Well, once we went to the [Indiana] Dunes. A lot of times, on lousy days, we’d go to museums and stuff like that. And we’d see Chicago.

SB: Really get to know the city.

HS: …And keep these kids out of trouble. And we weren't troublemaker backgrounds. I went to Sullivan High School, and in my era, it was college prep, I think. Only about two or three people in my class didn't go to college. And, actually, one of my classmates is Robert Steigman, who's a local appellate court judge whose politics are different than mine [laughs].

SB: So, when you said that you have a brother, was he your only sibling? Do you have others?

HS: [Unintelligible] and I have a stepsister, but I didn't meet her till I was in my 20s.

SB: When you were growing up, had either of your folks attended? College or higher education?

HS: Well, my mom was a school teacher, so she ultimately got a master's, and my father went to college to study music but never got a degree. Out of all my aunts and uncles, very few have college degrees. And of all my 14 cousins, only one didn't graduate college, and PhD in my family in law and MD is no big deal.

SB: So, you're a very education-minded extended family?

HS: Yes. Yeah, we have Thanksgiving, the only person without a doctorate is my daughter. Her quote only has a master's degree from the most prestigious art school in the country. So yeah…

SB: So that was…so growing up, education was important between your folks and your brother.

HS: Yeah, but there wasn't stress that much. This whole progression towards the professional degree wasn't even talked about.

SB: It was just kind of seen as something that you would do.

HS: Yeah. And this was not just me. My, I mean my class…When I go to high school reunions, doctors and lawyers are a dime a dozen.

SB: What was your…Walking it back a little bit, what was your grade school experience like? Because you said you went to public school, and your Catholic friends would all have gone to the parochial schools?

HS: Right. And plus Rogers Park was…OK, I only had one classmate who was black in K through 12. So not only was it culturally, if culture is religion divided, but it was race divided. And, I don't know if this is true across the board, [but] discipline was never an issue in grammar school. We were all there to do the work. And we did it, and the parents were incredibly supportive of the goals of education. It was across the board.

SB: Mhm.

HS: And one of the funny anecdotes that…One of my reviewers, this is one of the women [who] came up to me laughing, because she was always…she was very bright, but a troublemaker in high school, and the assistant principal, who was the troublemaker guy, told her, “You're never going to do anything more than be a waitress,” and she had a University of Chicago law degree. That's what the bottom of the class did.

SB: So it was very much that you didn't need to come up with an excuse to be studious or anything like that. And just speaking more generally, you know, how involved were you and your peers with…or how involved or how aware were you of world events growing up in the 50s with the Cold War, and later with Kennedy, of course, did you have like duck and cover drills or anything?

HS: Oh yeah!

SB: You did?

HS: Yep. Definitely. Actually, this is taking it forward. When I first became director at Unit One, we had this very large closet that I wanted to take over from what was in it, and what was in it was an atom bomb… Well, in case…it was a closet full of staples in case we got bombed. And it was like a year's supply of saltine crackers.

SB: Civil defense supplies?

HS: Yes. And to unload the closet, one of the guests made a conceptual art sculptural piece out of everything that was in there.

SB: So, I guess that shows what the difference in the shift in preparedness and the attitudes towards that in 15 or 20 years from when you were a young man to when you were a professional.

HS: Right. Well, interestingly, I have a decent number of relatives. Just a second please…

SB: Oh yeah.

HS: I get these phone calls. I have relatives, [unintelligible]. Allen Hall originally was a women's hall, and LAR was a women's hall. And I have relatives and friends who lived in those halls. Then that would have been the 50s.

SB: Before Allen became Unit One?

HS: Right. Well, Alan, okay, there's some history there. Alan didn't become Unit One until after I was there. Well, you keep talking, when we get to Alan Howell, we'll go there.

SB: Oh yeah, for sure. My understanding so far, and I'll ask you more later, is that it was smaller originally and then gradually expanded in the space.

HS: [Unintelligible]

SB: Not gradually?

HS: No.

SB: Okay, we'll get there, you know. And when you were growing up in this educationally minded environment, did you have a favorite subject or class or something you enjoyed the most when it came time to study it in school?

HS: Well, interestingly enough, I was always destined to be pre-med because of my mother. And it wasn't because she was a Jewish mother. It was because she had a very bad interaction with doctors when she was young and poor, taking her mother there. And she really wanted poor people to have adequate medical care. And I was the one. So, I was destined to be a pre-med and I…Short story is when I dropped out of pre-med, I stayed in biology and got my PhD in biology, but I think that social civics and poli-sci, what causes people to act the way they do, both in a personal and universal way was more interesting to me, and we had good teachers at Sullivan who taught us, who engaged us there. I could get by in math, chemistry, and physics and all that through college, but I didn't enjoy it.

SB: It was something you studied when you had to study it and not in your free time.

HS: You got it.

SB: And how involved were you in those civics classes and things like that? How involved were you all in the changes going on in the world at the time, you know the 50s, of the…the Eisenhower years, and then the tumultuousness under Kennedy?

HS: Ironically, I wasn't politically active at all outside of my mom’s realm. So, my mom was very politically active, and if she asked me to help, I would do it. So, if she was backing her candidate, I'd be…become part of that candidate’s venture to get elected. And in fact, a decent number of them did. And my Auntie Esther was the chair of the state Senate Committee on Higher Education. Jan Schakowsky is a Congress Rep., and she actually dedicated she was the chief speaker at the dedication of the beach that my mom is named after has named her name on.

But I was brought up in a radical Jewish tradition. It didn't translate a lot to action until later on in my life. So my givens were all that doing social good was normative. And I grew up in a neighborhood that was pretty much that way. So my mom was one of the establishers of the Rogers Park Community Council, which was a consortium of people who were interested in the stability of the community, but it demanded that the Jewish institutions and the Catholic institutions cooperated because they both had a common interest, for instance; she was big in building coalitions, and so I witnessed a lot of this. But growing up, my passion, really, where I put almost all my time, was competing as a swimmer.

SB: How did you get into competitive swimming?

HS: Well, my mom was a swim teacher as a…as a public school PE teacher; that's what she was, a public school PE teacher with swimming as a specialty. And my uncle was the same at Lane Tech High School. And he had, I don't know, nine state championship teams, and he coached Olympic gold. So swimming as a base level was part of my family. And I grew up on the beach. We never lived more than four blocks. Water was my life. It still is, by the way; I still compete.

SB: So it was something that was important to you from when you were quite young and something you were involved with from when you were quite young. Was there a particular event or stroke that was your favorite to compete in or your specialty?

HS: Through college, I was a freestyle sprinter, and I've morphed into butterfly and individual medley.

SB: And speaking of, uh, starting college, then when did you graduate high school?

HS: ‘62.

SB: ‘62. And was it…And like you said, you've been on an educational sort of path. So was it kind of assumed that you that college would be your next step?

HS: Oh yeah. Mm-hmm.

SB: Because at that time in ‘62, Vietnam hadn't really started up yet.

HS: No, but it was on the way.

SB: It was on the way. How aware was your community of the tensions heating up in Southeast Asia?

HS: Very.

SB: Oh, very uh-huh.

HS: And I, well, I did four years at Grinnell College, that's where I graduated. But then from Grinnell, I went to Berkeley, and you can't be in Berkeley in 1968 and not be aware of what's going on.

SB: Hmm.

HS: And I got my master's degree there, and then they came to Illinois for my doctorate, and then I stayed.

SB: What led you to choose Grinnell for your undergraduate degree?

HS: A friend of mine went there, and he said they had a good swim team, and it was a good school, and I applied, and I got in with enough money to make it affordable. It was a completely different way than—my wife and I helped our kids with their…they told us how they wanted us to help, and we were totally involved. And they went both went to Grinnell [laughter].

If my mother knew anything about that choice, by the time I went to college, my parents were divorced, and my father was pretty much—I mean, he was there, but he wasn't interactive. She never said a word about it. I did my own college visit. There was absolutely no interaction about choosing college with my mom.

SB: So, you handled that almost entirely on your own.

HS: Yeah.

SB: Did you apply anywhere other than Grinnell?

HS: No. I graduated high school at the time, Chicago Public Schools. You could either start in the fall or winter, and I graduated winter, and I figured if I didn't get into Grinnell, I'd do a gap year or a gap semester and start in the fall. But I got in.

SB: So you went to just start right away?

HS: Yeah, I missed the first day of class because I wanted to graduate from high school in my ceremony.

SB: So then you—so you walked the stage and then went to Iowa in the next couple of days?

HS: The next day.

SB: The next day, the very next day, then.

HS: Right.

SB: And what was, I guess, what was attending college in the early to mid-60s like at Grinnell or just, you know, what was the experience there like at that time?

HS: Well, right now Grinnell is known as one of the more progressive schools in the country, and its mission statement says that. When I went there, it was morphing from being middle of the road, conservative towards being progressive. Grinnell students were the first to ever [unintelligible] at the White House. And so there was an emerging social awareness at Grinnell

when I was there. And a lot of my classmates—when I go to reunions, there's no…very few conservatives there, so the people there morphed in a progressive way now. It's one of the more progressive schools in the country, and it's become very wealthy. So it's a different school than I was. Warren Buffett guided their investment policy.

SB: I'd say that's a pretty, pretty good money maker.

HS: Well, it was from the profits of selling venture capital money in Intel, who was a loan and so blah blah, blah. Yeah. Grinnell right now if you get into Grinnell, there's no loans. Whatever FAFSA says you need, you get.

SB: So that's a very different place than it was when you were there.

HS: Right. But in today's dollars, full four years to Grinnell in today's dollars would be 80,000. Full tuition there now is 80 [thousand], and now I'm just doing—that's the only school I know well because I stayed active. And I paid half. So I paid…my deal with my parents was “you pay the bill for tuition, fees, room and board, and I pay the rest: books, clothes, travel…”so it cost them $5000, which is $40,000 in today's dollars to send me to college. Then, after that it was all free because graduate school pays for itself.

SB: Hmm. And what was…the what would you say was the, you know, you said that Grinnell was shifting from a more conservative institution, edging towards the progressivism that it has today…Was there any discernible, you know, any way that really stood out in that shift from ‘62 to ‘66?

HS: I'm speculating that they started targeting more East Coast kids.

SB: And also, just while I'm on the topic, if you started college in ’62, that means you would have been there in November of ‘63, when Kennedy was assassinated. Do you remember that?

HS: Yes, I remember walking into the lounge where the only TV was, and people were just sitting there in shock, yeah.

SB: So you found that you found out the news just by walking in and realizing that something was…something was very wrong.

HS: Yep.

SB: That must have really been ah…Really been a shock.

HS: It was, I mean, you know, well, you know, assassination wasn't a big thing back then [laughter]. But guns weren't a big thing back then.

SB: Was the perception of Kennedy among college students…Was he a popular president to people of your generation?

HS: I don't remember. I think he was popular, but the people who dug into it weren't as fond of him because…I'm not sure if history shows him to be that good of a president, but he was very magnetic, and that overshadowed a lot of things.

SB: Hmm. We have a series of photographs that I came across in the Alumni Associations Archives a few years ago, and we just posted them on the Student Life and Culture

Archives blog a couple of weeks ago when he spoke here in 1960 on the quad. I'll send you the link to that if you'd like to see it.

HS: Wow, that'd be cool. Yeah.

SB: And, you know, even the…even just in…in still images, you know, you can tell by just looking at the guy that you can see why people gravitated and supported him just cause of that dynamic energy that he seemed to have.

HS: He had presence for sure.

SB: And so then, so you would have graduated in 1966?

HS: Right.

SB: What, you know, and you said you had…you had left the pre-med track when you were still an undergraduate at Grinnell. What led you to stop that course of study?

HS: I knew pretty quickly that…A combination of things, I think…Unconsciously, I didn't want to work as hard as I knew I had to work to get the grades. I graduated with a resume—a transcript that said pre-med. But. I'm not—I don't think I was competitive. I might have been competitive to go to one of the Caribbean Islands med schools, but…I love the water, so I went into marine biology. My degree is in marine studies.

SB: And so that's…and is that what led you to…led you then to Berkeley?

HS: Yeah, my advisor, there was an aquatic fish biologist, and my advisor at Illinois was a crab biologist.

SB: And did you go to Berkeley because you wanted to study with that person?

HS: Yes.

SB: What was the transition like from college at Grinnell to your first two years of graduate school at Berkeley?

HS: Was light-year travel! You know, without computers and all this kind of stuff, TV was the way that normalized teenagers’ views of other teenagers, and it hadn't gotten to us yet, so it was different, I mean…Sunday morning, you wake up and go around the corner to the park, and there's the Grateful Dead playing free as a warm-up band just to get up, you know? I saw Jimi Hendrix as a warm-up act. It was...it was a lot of action, both culturally and politically. Even though I was in Berkeley, the Summer of Love in San Francisco spilled over across the whole Bay Area and stuff like that.

SB: It did?

HS: Oh yeah.

SB: Did you ever go to the…San Francisco to the heart of it, or did you stay on…on the campus?

HS: Oh no, I went to San Francisco a lot.

SB: What was it just…I don't know if I've ever spoken with anyone who was, who was there for that, you know. What was that experience like?

HS: Well…The experience can only be looked on in retrospect, because when you're there, this is your life. And I didn't say, “Oh, wow, this is cool.” I just dove into what was going on.

SB: Hmm.

HS: And there was always a lot of political talk. My first semester there, the Black Panthers with guns were talking on campus. My friends were getting letters to come to their draft physicals because they were going on at the time, and refusing to go in and asking us to march in support of them with CIA or whoever's across the street with a suit and a camera. The TAs went on strike my first year there. I forgot what for [laughter]…it was either political and/or money, I think was at wanting the school to take. A stance on the war? And…There's a lot of social fluidity. Let's put it that way.

SB: Hmm.

HS: And the difference between 1960 and 1968 is the birth control pill, amongst many other things. Period.

SB: Hmm.

HS: It just opened up everything.

SB: So that was a…that was…that was a big change that…that was there?

HS: And there was no AIDS, and herpes wasn't a big thing. So yeah.

SB: Well, the Summer of Love was the Summer of Love.

HS: Yep.

SB: What was the…what was the favorite music? What was your favorite musical act you saw? You said you saw Hendrix as a warm up band, as a as a warm up act, which is just…just extraordinary, but there must have been just some great, great artistry going on out there.

HS: I don't think I had a favorite because I like a lot of types of music; I like rock'n'roll. But, are you familiar with Flatt and Scruggs bluegrass?

SB: Vaguely.

HS: Well, they were the group that made bluegrass popular, and they played at the Avalon Ballroom, which is where Janis Joplin did most of her playing, and they still got an audience. I saw Creedence Clearwater Revival on a loading dock supporting some radio station strikers. Uh, the Jefferson Airplane—I saw them before Grace Slick was in it…and after! Miles Davis redid Sketches of Spain at the Berkeley Community Theater. So it's just…there's music! And so I didn't really discriminate that much because it was there. I love jazz, and there was a lot of jazz going on. One of the guys that a few weeks ago played [unintelligible] was my go to guy in San Francisco. So yeah, that was…Too easy. It was very easy to get [unintelligible] and the environmental movement was on the way…was getting going. And, so it was real involving.

SB: What were some of the things that started with the environmental movement? The first things that you noticed as part of that…that began to happen?

HS: Yes. Well, one of my classmates in grad school wrote a very popular book called something like *The Environmental Handbook: What to Do Now?*, and it was probably primitive in terms of what's going on now, but it's going on now. And um…My field was behavior and ecology, and ecologists have always been on the environmental awareness. We have been…

SB: Yeah. And what was your…what was your course of study like there?

HS: Interestingly, my field was behavioral biology, and at the time, it was called ethology, E-T-H-O-L-O-G-Y. And so I took a lot of courses in animal behavior and did research in animal behavior. And this was funny. Do you know…know the name Richard Dawkins?

SB: I don't think I do, no.

HS: Well, he's one of the world's leading atheists. He's a biologist. If you look them up, you'll find him! He was on my master's committee. And Woody Guthrie's brother-in-law was one of my professors, and Charles Darwin's great-grandson was one of my professors. So you know when…you're when you're in that [unintelligible]. You get taken in!

SB: It certainly seems like it was a really exciting place to be.

Absolutely, it really was. But interestingly enough, when I came to Illinois, Illinois had morphed—oh, I didn't say this; when I left Grinnell, I came in February. I came to Illinois for a semester to work for the guy who was about to leave Illinois to go to Berkeley, and I knew that. So I did my first year—semester of grad school at Illinois, and then two years later, I came back and Illinois was transformed.

SB: Hmm.

HS:…Into a much more progressive place: more demonstrations, more anti-war stuff…And actually, Illinois—Champaign-Urbana had one of the strongest co-op systems in the country. So there was a co-op record store, co-op, grocery store, co-op restaurant, blah blah blah blah blah.

SB: Were those things there your first semester in '66, or had they arisen when you were…towards the later end of the '60s?

HS: [Unintelligible]. They kind of arose. Do you know [unintelligible] Coop in Lincoln's Square? Besides Coop, what does it sell us?

SB: I'm familiar with it, but I haven't patronized it.

HS: Coop, C-O-O-P.

SB: Ah, yeah.

HS: And all these places had a volunteer tax that most people paid, and the tax money went into supporting the ventures that were running in the road.

SB: Forgive me that makes sense.

HS: And it was in the elements of course. So these were like all hectic businesses. And it was very strong here. The counterculture was pretty strong. During the war, student protests did, I don't know if it completely shut down classes for a while, at least partly, but it was very strong.

SB: What would you say the difference or the similarities were between the protest culture here and the protest culture at Berkeley?

HS: Well, Berkeley, it was much more radical, with much more theoretical awareness at the leadership level. So if the leadership level would be, are you a Maoist or a Trotskyite or da da da da, we're here, you're left wing or not left wing. So there was a lot more sophistication occurred. They're smart people here, but it wasn't pervasive here the way it was, though. But it was very active.

SB: So what led you then after-- when did you get your master's at Berkeley? '68?

HS: Yep.

SB: So what led you back here then to go for your PhD? Was it another faculty member you wanted to work with?

HS: The short story is I spent too much time doing Berkeley and not doing school. And Illinois was easier than my advisor at Berkeley, who was from Illinois, said, “How about you going back?” That's a short story. And there was a guy here that took me under his wing, and so I wrote my dissertation under the, that my doctoral advisor gave.

SB: What was it, what was his note?

HS: I studied aggressive and sexual behavior in snapping shrimp. I wanted to study fighting behavior, and my advisor had grant money to send me to Duke Marine Lab, which is on the ocean. And he said, These shrimp fight if you put them together. And so that's what I needed. So there I went. In the winter, they weren't accessible; the animals weren't accessible. And I needed a good computer.

SB: So you incorporated some of the early computers into your work?

HS: Oh, I couldn't have done my dissertation without the maintenance here.

SB: What was using it like in those days? Like when you wanted to do calculations or something of that sort, you know, what did you have to physically do or how did that process work?

HS: Your data was typed in on cardboard punch cards, so you had to have somebody else do it. And you fed these cards into the computer where you had a program to analyze whatever the cards have on them. Where was the computer located? DCL. In a building, you know, DCL, when it expanded, they just built a building around the building. It was the original building at that time. Yeah, well, UNIVAC was no longer here. And a lot of the computer stuff was done in Chicago. So they would send, if you had a big job, they'd send it up to Chicago. And the, in terms of campus climate, you know, you had been here in Illinois briefly in 1966 for a semester. And then when you came back in what I assume was the fall of '68 to begin your PhD,

SB: What was the, what if any changes were there in the community and in the climate? Because I did an interview with a gentleman, you may know him, Joe Rank, who was at the Alumni Association for a long time. And he described a very, like a very noticeable shifting in the culture and the climate here at that time. Is that something you noticed as well?

HS: Absolutely. When I was here my first one semester, I was one of the few guys that wore sandals. When I came back in '68, everybody wore sandals. That's a metaphor. It's a metaphor, but it's an example too. It's true, but sandals are, you know, everybody wears Birkenstocks now, but in those days, those were hippie shoes. So EU of I that you went to in '66 might have had more in common with EU of I of '60 or '61. than it did with EU of I of '70 or '71. And there's another big change. U of I has always had a very heavy Greek presence, but in the late 60s and 70s, you might get data on this, I'm sure you can get it. I think the Greek system went into a decline in terms of membership and/or Greek members became more hippie-like And if you wanted to find a dealer, you could just as well find them in a Greek house as anywhere. That I've been told. So at that time, it wasn't, in the later 60s and 70s, it wasn't necessarily the Greek community was the straight-laced people and everyone else were the hippies. It was, they were a lot more aligned with some of the rest of campus at that time. Or at least a subset. A subset, more than before. And, and somebody in student affairs might have these numbers. It might be that, you know, the rule of thumb in the Greek system is, I don't know if it still is, you have to live in a house your freshman year.

SB: Or there's a rule of living in the house because you got to keep the houses full for money reasons. But when people left the house, did they stay active once they got into their apartments?

HS: You know, I don't know the answer to that. I think it varies. My friends didn't. My brother didn't. He was, as soon as he left his fraternity house, he, he, he, those were his friends, but his friends were kindred spirits to him. And he was not a fraternity boy.

SB: Did he attend college here?

HS: Yeah, he got his undergrad here and his master's at Madison.

SB: What did he study?

HS: Urban planning.

SB: And you know, when you were a PhD student here, did you, were you ever a TA or did you focus mostly on research?

HS: I was almost always a TA.

SB: You were. What was it like to teach the students at that time?

HS: I had fun. It was fun. And there was a while when being in college catch out of the Army and then there was a while where you had to have good grades to keep out of the Army and if there was a time when a lot of us just gave all A's um I'm not going to be the one and and grade inflation I think grew out of that so there was a at so at first around that time one simply needed to be enrolled in college to avoid the draft but then That was the main, that was, that was the main way. If you were married, you were an exempt or then married, I'm not sure about all this,

but these get married with children, a clergy, um, underweight. I mean, one of my office mates purposely stayed underweight for five years.

SB: Wow. And, you know, what do you remember about the protests at that time? Were the graduate students involved or was it mostly the undergraduates?

HS: I don't know, everybody was involved. Everybody was involved. Keep in mind that the graduate student population in Illinois has probably always been much more cosmopolitan because the grads programs in Illinois have always been good enough to get people from all over the country and all over the world. And I'm not sure what it is now, but in my day, Berkeley, Cal Berkeley, Texas, and Illinois were amongst the top five producers of PhDs. You can get that data if you want. I'm sure we've got it somewhere. And in fact, there was a time when I read this in the News Gazette, that the metropolitan area, Rantoul-Champaign-Urbana, had the most PhDs per capita in the country. Now, you know, if that's not the, you could still say high. So the average educational level is high, although I don't think very many people conceptualize half of Urbana is at poverty level. But people don't seem to, if your focus is the university, that's not relevant to you until your kids go to school. Yeah.

SB: Was it still that way at that time or is that a more recent phenomenon?

HS: I think I don't know the answer to that because the stereotype is that Black people are the poor people. But I work a lot in the community now. I did 10 years as a volunteer in the foster system and 10 years and I'm still mentoring at Urbana High School and lower income is not exclusively a racial issue. There's a lot of poor non-black people as well. My take of being Black and poor makes it harder than being White and poor, but being poor is hard. And we have a growing Hispanic population in this town that never was before.

SB: That is a more modern phenomenon.

HS: But we've always had an African-American population, and one of the reasons is, I don't know how much the train played a role, but the train travels from the Deep South to Chicago, and that's the route that Southern Blacks took when they wanted to go urban in Chicago, and people stopped along the way because they told me. I mean, I worked with people who told me they stopped in Champaign. I mean, these are, I was friends with a lot of janitors. And so that was part of that.

SB: So they were coming up during the second Great Migration, or even the first Great Migration. And sometimes, you know, the destination might have been Chicago or Detroit or Minneapolis, but people would stop a lot of the way.

HS: And interestingly, one of the guests at Unit One who came a couple of times, Jim Loewen, L-O-E-W-E-N, wrote a couple of books, but one of them was called Sundown Towns. And he especially looked at Illinois Sundown Towns. Sundown towns are towns where if you're black, you better not be on the street at that. And a lot of them followed the Illinois Central Railroad path.

SB: Because that was who owned the tracks in those days. It wasn't, they hadn't been bought by Canadian National yet.

HS: Right. It was called the Illinois Central.

SB: I'm pretty sure that still stamped on some of the overpasses on Windsor and Neil and stuff.

HS: Well, are you familiar with the song The City of New Orleans?

SB: Vaguely, yeah.

HS: Arriving to, Arlo Guthrie sang it. Well, it was written by Stevie Goodman, who was the... He died early of cancer, but he was a troubadour, a U of I grad. And he wrote it. And Arlo Guthrie learned it and made it famous. But it's about Stevie Goodman's ride from Chicago to school here. So the…oh, that's right. So Amtrak carried over the historic name of that train when they took over the passenger service. I've ridden in it a couple times.

SB: That's very interesting. Was that, and at that time, you know, because was your family still in Chicago at the time?

HS: Yeah.

SB: Is that how you would get home if you were going to visit? Would you take the train or did you have a car?

HS: I had a car.

SB: You did?

HS: There were a few times when I took the train.

SB: What was it like to drive on the interstate highways when they were brand new at that time?

HS: It was, it was great. And getting from the north side of Chicago out to the interstate [highway?], in the beginning, when I came, 57 wasn't finished.

SB: Oh, it wasn't.

HS: So I take 55, Interstate 55 to Highway 47, and then 47 takes you to Mahomet, and then you get on 74 or Highway 150. That was my original way down there. So they were still building 57 at that time.

SB: Very interesting.

HS: Yeah. And when you're, no, I just love that kind of, that, I mean, my undergrad degree and one of my master's degrees is in history. So I really like getting these perspectives of things that nowadays that we, not necessarily take for granted, but you know, it's kind of, when you've taken 57 a bajillion times, you kind of think, oh, well, this must always have been here, but it's cool to hear from people who were there at the time when that was changing, what that was like.

SB: When you had been in graduate school, was your idea that you might like to be a professor yourself, or what sort of goal did you have when you were pursuing your studies?

HS: I wanted to be a professor, but by the time I got my PhD, two things happened. The job market in my field dropped out, and I wasn't real excited about being biology researcher. I liked teaching but I didn't especially I wasn't passionate enough about biology to make it my life. You enjoyed the teaching part of it more than research. Yeah and I enjoyed interacting with students a

lot so I fell into the perfect job for me. And how exactly uh how exactly did that come about because I know that unit one was originally established in, I think, '72 or '71.

SB: So, you know, when, as now, you know, you were, of course, a PhD student, so you wouldn't have lived there. When did you first, uh, when did you first hear about it?

HS: Well, two different ways, actually. Um, after I got my doctorate, I stayed on at UI as a TAD. I don't know how that worked, but I was an academic advisor in this program that I don't think exists anymore, called Individual Plans of Study, where you could decide in your own major. And there were a lot of Unit One students in that program. And once, my advisor was asked to give a talk at Unit One about animal communication, and he said, Oh, you just do it. So I went over to Unit One and gave a talk. Those were my two ways of doing it.

SB: So then you found out about its existence kind of through students that you were advising. And then your physical visit was you were actually a presenter before you were an administrator over there.

HS: Right.

SB: And how long did you stay in the TA role?

HS: Well, I'd say two or three years, I'm not sure. About two or three years.

SB: And how did you go from simply meeting students that were living there and giving a talk to working at Unit One yourself? What was that like?

HS: How did it happen or what was it like?

SB: How did it happen for starters and then what was it like?

HS: The director of Unit One, there were three directors before me. Wait, let's go back. Did you get the history of how it started and stuff like that?

SB: Not as much as I would like. I've done some reading in the archives, and we have some donated posters from when it was first proposed. But any information you have firsthand on that would be great.

HS: OK. This will feed in. The president of U of I, David Dodds Henry, said to the campus, “Explore the possibility of a Living Learning Center that combines”—I'm not quoting him, but it's close—"students' lives in their academic lives.” That was it. That was the starting state. And they got this guy out of education and named Allen Kurvis to be the first director. And I think in the beginning there was only 200 kids in Allen Hall. And that... And in the beginning they lived on a couple of floors and after that they lived interspersed in the bowl. And then there were two more directors after that, I think. One was Bill Plater, who later on became a college chancellor, and a guy named Paul Hoover, who was a physicist. And basically, the program revolved around stuff, and I can't go beyond stuff. Well, they had the Artist in Residence program, but it was either for a semester or a year, rather than the way it is now. And all the courses were called LAS 110 or LAS 210, and they're all experimental courses. And there was a design feature that didn't work out very well, where a student under the LAS rubric would do a one-on-one with some faculty out there. And they solicited faculty to submit proposals, “If you want to work with me, this is what we'll do.” And that didn't work out very well, but that was the model. And then some

experimental courses with word names that were just fine courses, but...Okay. And... the no. I know what happened.

The associate director was a woman named Paula Trinkler and her specialty was women's studies and communication and in fact under her every 8 o'clock on Mondays they had Mondays at 8 which was a women's discussion group which morphed into the women's studies program at U of I. And she got a job, an offer to be on the faculty, so she left and they were looking for an associate director and someone said to me, “It would be a good job for you to apply.” I applied and got the job. My first day on the job, the director Paul Hoovers quit, and I was the associate director and the guy who was my supervisor at the Individual Plans of Study program, Roland Holmes, was a dean in LAS, and he became the acting director. But he and I were on great terms. I had been reporting with him for three years. He said, “Do it, and I'll be your guy. But it's your program.”

And halfway through my first year there, I got a letter from the Dean of LAS. And at the time, Unit One was housed in the College of Liberal Arts with a codependency partnership, no, with a non-equal partnership with housing. So it was an LAS program of housing as a co-sponsor, but not on equal grounds. And I got a letter from the dean that said, “Your time is up.” At the end of this year, you're [fired?]. And soon thereafter, we got a letter saying, we're disbanding the program as of this year. The dean said, “The program isn't meeting its directive, and I told you the directive, it was to explore something.” There were no criteria of success. And he got his LAS advisory committee to go along with it. And in reality, and I don't think this is a rumor. I think this is true. He was sucking winds so badly budgetarily, he was just grasping at straws for money. And if he got rid of the program, he still kept them up. Even though the money source was from the Chancellor. Because I went to the Chancellor. There's another sidebar. This is how things really work. My go-to sport at the time was squash. Squash was played particularly by a certain subset, which included the upper level of the administration. So I had played squash with the provost and the chancellors. I was on a first name basis with him on there, so I could make an appointment with him and talk to him for real. And one of them told me, it doesn't sound fair, but it's his money, no matter where it comes from. It's been his for so long. We're not taking it away from him. Okay, so if we wanted to survive, we needed LAS to be there.

SB: Okay.

HS: So, at the time, and this is where Student Culture comes in, and this was around ‘74-ish, the students were outraged and said, “This is our program, you can't take it away from us.” And so the students and the staff, we have nothing to lose because we all lost our jobs. How do we protest this? And the dean said, “If you can convince my faculty advisory committee to change their minds, you can have your program there.” So the students rehearsed, and each one of them made an appointment with a member of the committee, and the committees really were impressed by these students, but they say, “We're not changing our minds.”

So we did a strategy and said, “Well, if we have no power here, where's our power?” And we said, well, our power is, wait, let's go back. Unit One historically has to have very happy parents because they have happy kids. And the reason they have happy kids is their kids feel like they're involved in a community of, it is the community feeling that makes NAED Unit One, and I'm saying NAED because I think it's over. It's not the way it used to be, let's put it that way. I know that. I have primary sources. Our power is in our parents, and so all the kids had their parents write a letter to the dean. “This is such a great program, why are you getting rid of it?” And the

parents wrote letters to their state legislators. “This is such a great program, why are you getting rid of it?” And by the way, this was at a time when there was state money in higher education. When I first came here, there was no, tuition was trivial. So that state funding was important. And so the legislators, in order to answer their constituencies, letters had to go to Dean while you get rid of this. Dean had to hire an extra secretary to take care of this. One of the kids who happened to be white, and at the time, there was a significant number of Black kids in uniform as well. And one of the active Black kids, Guardian Angel was chair of the State Senate Committee on Higher Education, and he was Black. And he asked that question. “How come you're getting rid of a program where all these Black kids are doing well?”

And the dean gave up and said, “Okay, you can have your program next year. I'm plugging these holes.” And so we got a year. And he got rid of the program again. And I forgot what our strategy was then, but it was somewhat similar. Oh, one of the most active members of the program at the time was Lucy Stevenson. Her grandfather was the Democratic candidate for president. Oh, Adlai Stevenson, yeah. And her father was Adlai Stevenson II. Lucy's mom wrote a letter to the dean. “My daughter loves it.” I have a letter somewhere. “My daughter loves it. If you get rid of the program, she might leave U of I.” I'm still Facebook friends with Lucy. Blah, blah, blah, kept the program another year. Dean said, “I’m getting rid of you next year for sure.” This is as true as I can come, because I've told the story before.

The next year, we had a new chancellor. And he came from the University of Washington, where politics were more student-centered. And in the beginning of his stay, he went and did evenings at dorms to answer questions. And he got questions like, “Why aren't the showers hotter?” and shit like that. And he comes to Unit One, and one of the kids who had just awarded a marshal earlier that day said, “What's your stance on divestment?” Because this was the South African divestment time. And they asked him hard-hitting questions on politics, and he liked it. He liked it. It so happens that he was a political scientist whose specialty was student protest. So the students read his book and modeled their protest to keep Unit One, on his guidelines for a successful protest. [Unintelligible] serious on this. You can get the book if you can find it. I think his name was Gerberding. And at the time, there was a Allerton conference on undergraduate education for faculty. And the students went out there and pamphleted “How could you have a conference on student blah, blah, blah, if you're getting rid of the only student-centered program on campus?” And they were very good about it. And they were invited into the conference. And at the end of the conference, the chancellor said to the provost and the vice chancellor for student affairs, “Make it work.” And we were given a realignment, and they asked me, “Well, what do we need?” And I said, “We need to come out of LAS because the demography of Unit One really did reflect, the undergraduate enrollment in Unit One reflected the demography by college.” We were a multi-college place. Even though it had a reputation for being artsy, we had the artsy engineers. So we really did look at that data. Put us under the provost's office so we're free of college politics. And the Vice Chancellor for Student Affairs, Stan Levy, who was in charge of housing, that's under him, really wanted an end to the academic world, and he was a thousand percent behind us. Do you know that name, Stan Levy?

SB: It rings a bell.

HS: He was there for a long, long time. And he was highly academic in his look at the world. He was president of the local ACLU, so he did have that left-leaning thing. And I said to the advisory committee, so they put together an advisory committee, and one of the members was a

very valued, unified valued professor of biochemistry or something like that. And he said to me, “My [unintelligible] is to put you out of business unless you can prove to me you shouldn't be.” “OK, so what do I have to do, John?” And one of the things…and mainly we had to build an academic profile that wasn't counter to university ways of being. So the LAS 110 stuff had to go away because it wasn't…because all courses that are offered at U of I ultimately come under the purview of the department if the department head or—you know how departments are put together either with a head or a chair?

SB: Yeah.

HS: Either the chair who responds to his advisory committee or her advisory committee, or the head is the dictator.

SB: Okay.

HS: That person has to say okay to anything that happens in their department.

SB: Okay.

HS: So we changed, and rather than have LAS 110, 112, whatever, We've got departmental courses, regular departmental courses into the dorm. So they were already approved. And if they were gonna be smaller than normal, wait, so RHET 105, all we had to do was get them to agree to a change of place, a different room with preferred enrollment to the kids that live in the dorm. We could give them that data. The only difference was a different place, and you took a class with those people who were your dormmates, so that the instructor could possibly make use of that sense of community to teach the course. And we gave all of the instructors’ office space, and we gave them all meal passes, and we gave them all budgets if they wanted to do extra stuff. If you wanted to have your kids over for dinner, if you wanted to take them to Chicago, to the Art Institute—that was all built in so that the students and the instructors could have a relationship. Most of the courses, because they were first and second semester courses, were TA-taught. But we also did get professors to teach there. And then later on, there was a special fund that you advised for first-year seminar courses taught by professors, and they got extra money for it.

So once again, we'd ask for, “Will you do this at Unit One? We have the money for you.” And that money is cool for them because it was on top of salary. Blah, blah, blah, blah. So we had full faculty there as well. And most faculty who taught there loved it there. And therefore, we got people who were supportive of the program. This was later on. So the advisory committee said, blah, blah, blah. “You have three years to do it.” And after two years, we did it. And they said, “You did it.” We reached a criteria of what we call academic credibility. And we had a faculty advisory committee who oversaw us so that the faculty was involved and department heads were involved. And since we had a fund to buy courses, it's very weird. Every course had a different model. [Unintelligible] was willing to say, build a course, we don't care. Econ was said, econ model. If we teach it for 60 and you want 30, you've got to pay for some of it. Some courses said you've got to pay for the whole thing. It depends on, but we did it. We had a budgetary line to buy courses. Okay.

Concurrent with that, Allen Hall went from part of it being Unit One students to all of it being Unit One students, and an amount of money added to what it costs to live in Allen Hall to supplement Unit One.

SB: Like an activity fee.

HS: Yeah. But it really wasn't. It wasn't an extra fee. It was just that your amount of money to live in Allen Hall was this much more than it would have been without Unit One. It didn't show up as a different amount of money, as a separate value. In the beginning, some kids didn't like it. And we'd say, “If you don't like it, you can leave because we'll fill the hall.” Wait. For many years, we turned people away. Let's go. Yeah. So we made many, many people happy. We had happy parents. After a while, we had children of parents. Children of Unit One alums came there. After one [unintelligible] kid came up to me and said, “You were my mom's advisor.” And I reunited with her, and I'm still friends with her.

So I'll do a lot of asides. So the student group that was active to get Unit One settled are still an active community of people. And they're all people who have kids out of college. About four years, five, six years ago, who knows, I was in D.C. having dinner with three of them. And one of them said, “Why don't we have a reunion?” And I said, “I'll be there.” I will not help do it. And I don't have a list. We don't have lists. And I said, this was in June, I said, “I think you need a year to get it together.” They got it together virtually for three months. In three months, 100 people showed up at one of the forest reserves outside of Chicago, and all it cost was renting the pavilion. There was a jar. The jar was full halfway through. There's a sign by the jar. The rest of the money goes to this nonprofit.

So these people are still a community. And what's cool to me is, by talking to them, I'd say most are doing socially progressive careers. And I got one of my daughters’ a job. Not a job, she's an artist, and I got her a contract to do something that was…

SB: So it's a very active network, even all these years later.

HS: Oh, and they still are, I'm in touch with a lot of alums still. And in fact, last week, now she wasn't an alum of the program, but one student. You could take courses that one even if you weren't. And once a student came in and said, “Can I take this course?” And I said, “Yeah, there's room you can take it.” And she was a volleyball All-American and just retired from being the coach at Minnesota. She's in her 50s. We're still tight. You know, we, after that one meeting, we became, well, she babysat for me. We became friends and we're good friends now. And there's tons of alums that I'm still in contact with because the concept of community was always the centerpiece of the success of the program.

And we never were challenged after that in the sense of we never went over budget, we always got reviewed well by who had to review us, and we turned students away. We didn't have to have academic success. We admitted, we weren't an honors program or anything like that. And after, and in that reorganization, there was a recognition that I was really director, in fact, so they made me director.

SB: So for a couple of years early on, you were acting director, but somebody else was nominally in charge, but you were running the program.

HS: I was acting as director. I wasn't even acting here. I was acting as director. And the director was, and when this guy left, they got another faculty member to do it. Same thing, because he had a full schedule. And he kept an eye on things and stuff like that. And we were always strongest in coursework. And to me, okay, let's go back. I modeled the place after Grinnell College.

SB: You did? That was a question I wanted to ask of, you know, what was the community like in comparison to the other places you'd studied?

HS: Any small liberal arts college should be such that you have a lot of friends. Not people in your major necessarily. Both my daughters graduated there, they're in their 30s, and they still have lots of friends there and connections. And that's part of college to me. And because you learn a lot from other students who have different ways of looking at the world. And I had a very big conflict with a lot of staff members because I was very clear that I wanted some of our guests in residence to be conservatives. Because even if you are a progressive, you have to learn what the ideas that oppose yours are all about. And one of our guests was there for four weeks. John Anderson was a Republican congressman from somewhere around Rockford. He did run for president on a progressive Republican. So he wasn't... a MAGA Republican, but he was a Republican. He was there for a year. And when he came in to eat in the cafeteria, he would find a group of students and say, “Can I join you? Do you know who Barry Goldwater is?”

SB: Of course.

HS: We had his speech writer twice. Carl Hess, who wrote through the thing, “Extremism, Extremism, blah, blah, blah. Extremism.” Okay, he wrote that. He was there at least twice. I became friends with him. And actually I have, he became a sculptor, I mean a welder, and I have one of his welded pieces in my backyard. And, um... but we had people from, we had more progressive than non-progressive, okay. And, um... it was...it was very interesting, and the students who I talk to now look back and say, “How did you allow this to happen? How did you allow this radical fringe to have an influence on us when they were still over the edge?” And I said, “Because you had to find out for yourself.” And they said, “Well, we did. And we weren't damaged.” [Laughter]. But I think the commitment to serving society was important. And we actually had—now I'm rambling. Want me to keep rambling?

SB: Carry on.

HS: One of our courses had to do with volunteering. And you met as a group once a week to talk about the concept of service. And then you had a volunteer experience that you did. And then we honed it down to volunteering at a specific grammar school, which is walking distance from Mandel Hall, Leal Grammar School. And over time, we had a former [unintelligible] school teacher teach the course, so she had more hints to it. I think she might still be doing it. And then I went to Oracle Corporation. Remember my friend Larry Ellison? He wasn't part of this. I went to Oracle and said, “Could I have a grant to put together a computer lab in the building?” Now, this is when computers were just becoming and poor people just didn't have it. “I want to put a computer lab into this grammar school, and I guarantee that we will have volunteers to help the kids use the computers.” So it was a win-win for everybody. The kids, and a lot of the kids who took the course, were exploring and wanting to go into your teaching. They weren't teaching majors, so this was their way of getting a clue of what it's like to be in school. When we had, when we started this semester, we always had an orientation where we invited Unit One students to come earlier than move-in day, and one of those things was volunteer day, and we usually did something with the Urbana Park District, go out to Meadowbrook Park and do invasives, stuff like that. In the beginning, part of orientation was a camping trip. We did a couple of camping trips with 300 students.

SB: Wow.

HS: Yes, oh, it was crazy. Now I was lucky, I was single at the beginning because really, I had to get there early enough in the day, I ate in the morning, to do my job was the university, but I also had a PW ad because that's where the action is. And so I was lucky, and I had my weekends free and stuff like that. By the time I got married and had kids, the place flowed much better. And Laura was assistant director when I was director for a long time, and she was more in charge of nighttime stuff, so we parceled out. But going back, the concept of community is real important because that first group was very tight, but there are other groupings. Are you familiar with Eboo Patel?

SB: That rings a bell, I think. Yeah, I don't know if I know that one, but…

HS: Eboo is the top dog at a place called Interfaith America, which used to be called the Interfaith Youth Corp. And in the beginning, he established that with one of his Unit One buddies. And they would get youth, probably youth groups from different faith backgrounds, i.e. church groups and temple groups, to collaborate on something that they both agreed was worth collaborating on to find out that they have something in common. And he was on Obama's something committee. But he has, in his area, he has national prominence. He does college graduation, commencement speeches and stuff like that. And he and his buddies are still very close. And so if I wanted to get a hold of his age group, I call Eboo and we're still on very good…he's like a Rhodes Scholar as well. There was an interesting thing. In the *News-Gazette,* you know when they ask questions of alums and they have talking heads, little blurbs. And one question was, “What's your favorite memory at U of I?” And the guy who's now the president of the University of Wiley, who got his bachelor's and doctorate at U of I, said, “Unit One.” And he was in the original class. I didn't know. And I wrote him a note saying thanks. And I found out from looking, when I looked him up, the first hit I got was a picture of him surrounded by his board of trustees. And the chairman's board was a friend of mine from Grinnell.

SB: What a connection.

HS: More than a friend, actually, but yeah. And we have that, and we have at least one other college president, but I don't keep track of this kind of stuff. And really, reaching that high level isn't as important to me as people who go back with a view that they, that giving back is part of what they should be, that's part of their should. Now, what happened over time, now, was when Stan Levy stopped being the vice chancellor, wait, let's go back. At that same time, they have, when I first took the job, the director of housing rose through the ranks through the maintenance division. He was replaced by a guy who came from Michigan State, where they have a bunch of programs like Unit One. And he was in charge of that. And he had a PhD in education. So he was much more in tune with what we were after. He was Gary North, and he was fantastic. And so he was very supportive as well. And by the time he was replaced, we were very well established so that one of the new directors of housing, when I first met him, he said, “I don't know what you do, but everybody says you do well, so I'm going to leave you alone.” So the model for my... stuff comes through my hearing aids. Okay, I'm fine. The model was do your job, we'll leave you alone. Let us know what you're doing. Okay.

And I didn't go outside the boundaries. But there is a very different mindset in student affairs and academic affairs. And over time, oh, and then there came a time when Pat Askew, who was director of admissions and then became vice chancellor for student affairs, decided that there are going to be more programs like Unit One. Unit One was unit one because they're supposed to be two, three, and four. Many years later, she said, but she, I was on the committee, she says, “We're

not going to have another Unit One. Keep your mouth shut.” So that they have theme-based places, which I could have told her don't work well. I'll tell you why in a second. I'll give you an example. One would be to put advisors, freshman advisors like the general curriculum, and now there's a special place for freshmen, into the halls, so students could get advising whenever they wanted. Students only go to advising for when it's time to need advising. Yeah, advanced enrollment. And then there was a place out in PAR, Women in Science and Technology, and really all those women wanted was tutors. I got them a course called Women in Science and Technology taught by an MD/PhD student. PhD in biochem, MD/MD, but her father was the director of the shark lab at the University of Miami. She had already gone around the world studying sharks. No one wanted to take her course. They wanted tutoring. There was a course in international relations, and the original director there was Gandhi's grandson, and it took a long time to move that program at all.

But when there became more than one Unit One, they had to hire; they had to create an administrative position to supervise them all. And they offered it to me, and I said, “Only if I could still stay Unit One,” and they said, “No, this is a full-time,” and I said, “No.” because it would put me into an office with a bunch of administrators, and I wouldn't have student contact.

SB: And that was still important to you at this time.

HS: Oh, that was it.

SB: It was it. That's why you thrived in the role so much.

HS: Yeah, I like these. I love watching people grow. For a long time, I taught freshman seminar. And it was on the nature of the university. This is not how to do the university. You don't have to know this stuff to graduate, but if you know it, it might be enriched. Like, why are students here? And they say, “Well, to get a degree.” And I said, “Well, here's data that says if you take the money of tuition, if you take the money it costs to go to college and invest it, you might be better off because investments grow.” There was data that showed that. You want to get a degree of educational for two different things. And then, “Why are faculty here?” And they say, “Well, to teach us.” And I say, “Well, let's look at the faculty reward system so you'll understand why you never have a professor teaching there. And if you do, it's a lecturer where the ratio is a thousand to one, so that makes it pretty cheap.” And look at science professors who get grants that buy them out of teaching. So the hottest people on campus don't teach you. They're teaching their grad students. So you got to understand. Do you know about grant overhead?

SB: Vaguely, but would you explain?

HS: Huh?

SB: Somewhat, but would you speak on it?

HS: Almost all grants have come into all universities—I don't know about colleges; that's irrelevant—have an overhead, a percent overhead attached that the university makes. And it's somewhere at U of I, it's not called overhead anymore, it has a fancy name. It's somewhere around 50 to 60%. So when the money comes in the front door for your grant that you've applied for, the university immediately takes 60% off the tile, to quote, cover the cost of supporting you, your secretary, your electricity, and all this bullshit. And then the money filters to you through your department who takes more money. So any, oh, and many faculty, if they're really good at

what they do, will build their salaries into the grant so they don't have, so that they're independent of the university financially. The university will buy a cheap replacement for them to do the teaching they have to do. And this person not only generates a decent amount of money for the university through the overhead, they get more time to do their research, which makes it such that they can still get more grants and do the publication that makes them and their department hotshot stuff. OK, so you've been here a while. Is this new to you?

SB: The, in as many words, yes, but the concept, no.

HS: Okay. Nobody knows this stuff. Yeah. Just a sec. I have to... I'm getting a phone call and...

SB Oh, I can pause.

HS: No, it'll go away.

SB: Oh, okay. If you gotta take it, please feel free.

HS: And I get confused with all this stuff, but let me quickly take it.

SB: Okay.

HS: So I teach them that, and then we brought up the Chief issue and the diversity issue. And this was funny too, in one class, and my class tended to have diversity that reflected U of I diversity. It wasn’t an all-white class. In one class, one of the white students said, “How come I always talk diversity in every class I go to?” And I knew their backgrounds. And most of the class, almost all of it was from the Chicago area. And I said to her, and I knew where she was from and what her background, I said, “You introduce more diversity into this class than anybody else.” And she looked at me. “You come from a pig farm.” Her parents were pig farmers. “You have a house that has to have a special room for changing clothes.” And she said, “Yeah.” And we got the kids in class are listening in. And they have no idea what we're talking about. You were, you know what I mean? Everybody else in class had an urban or a suburban something in common. So I said, “So we're not looking just at race and gender. We're looking at the totality of what's going on around here so you can understand all this stuff.” And three years into grad school, one of the students wrote me a postcard and said, “I finally figured out what you were talking about.” Now, that's the payoff, really, when someone, when, you know what I'm saying. Yeah. So that was the fun part for me. And I didn't need the money. My wife started out as a counselor of the counseling center. When she was offered the directorship, she said, “Nah, I'm going into private practice.” So she knew what I was up to. I mean, she knew my world.

SB: So you got married while you were the director. You weren't married before you started the role.

HS: Right. Oh, yeah. I was 40 when I got married with a long time. And one thing about the Unit One program that was dynamite was the music lesson program. Have you been talked to about that?

SB: Yes, briefly. Some people that took music lessons and then one of my interviewees was in the very first class and Dr. Neely Bruce led his LAS 110 and it was the American Music Group, so I've heard on that as well.

HS: It morphed into private music lessons. You tell us what you want to learn and we'll find a teacher for you. So it's not... driven by, by the end of this session, you'll have this. I want to learn

folk guitar, okay. I want to learn bagpipes, okay. About a third of the hall every semester was enrolled in this course. That level of participation is incredible.

SB: And at this point, was Unit One the whole hall, so we're talking a third of Allen?

HS: Yeah.

SB: That's a lot of students.

HS: Yes. And one of the things about it, and I knew most of the instructors pretty well, I'll give you an aside on this one too, is they taught there, and we had three soundproof music practice rooms that anybody could use at any time, but they were reserved for lessons. If a kid came in, and the teacher said, “You're not ready for a lesson. You look completely depressed.” They have an adult to talk to. And the teachers knew this. One of the teachers had left the Metropolitan Opera to get her doctorate. She was an understudy, and she was good enough to be part of the Met. She came to UHI to get her doctorate in opera. That's the level O. This is a [unintelligible] double. When we went looking for colleges with one of my kids, we were at Wesleyan University. We walked past the door and said, neither [knew?]. So I knocked on the door and I said, “I used to teach Unit One. My daughter's interested in music at Wesleyan. Will you talk to her?” And he said, “Yeah, leave here, come back in an hour.”

SB: Did she end up going there?

HS: No, she went to Grinnell.

SB: Oh, she went to Grinnell.

HS: But she had got her PhD at Texas in Child Development, which is what she does for a living, but she also sings opera professionally as a hobby, and Unit One teachers were amongst those who got her there. I paid for, I paid for them, but I paid for my daughter to get five years of music lessons and voice through people who were good. And who you had met originally at Unit One.

SB: Was the, if I might ask, when the, when you first moved into the role, you know, you had said, were the artists, were the pro, was the programming You know, you said it changed when it moved from under the umbrella of LAS, of course, you know, there was a shift. Were the artists in residence of things like that happening already at that time?

HS: Yeah, the artists in residence program were part of maybe starting year two, but like I said, they were for a very long time. And we switched it to maybe a four-week residency and then over time it got down to a two week or one week residency because we couldn't either pay enough or we discovered through student interaction that was four weeks was not, was too much time for students to stick with someone.

SB: It seemed like the shorter time periods were more effective both financially and with the best outcome for the students.

HS: Right. And the kind of people we got were almost always freelancers. Yeah. And we had to fit their schedules. We had to fit schedules together and stuff like that. But we had some dynamite, I guess. I mean, I'm still in touch with some of them.

SB: Do you remember Jeff Glassman and the United Mime Workers?

HS: Oh, for sure. I'm still friendly with Jeff.

SB: I met Jeff when Debbie Langerman donated her materials from her career to us, and I processed them a couple of years ago, and about a year after that, we got an inquiry from Jeff, and he said, “I've got my records,” which of course [unintelligible] with Debbie's for a period. And, you know, he said to the archives, “Would you like to receive them?” And they said yes, and they said, “Hey, Spencer, you've processed Debbie Langman's papers. Why don't you work on this project?”

And I think sometimes people call people characters and it's not necessarily deserved. In the case of Jeff Glassman, the man is the very definition of a character. It was a treat to work with his materials, and I knew almost nothing about performing arts of that type before I worked with his collection and got to meet him and Debbie several times.

HS: And I met them when they were together.

SB: Yeah, 'cause they were, 'cause they, as the mine workers, they were guests in residence at Unit One.

HS: Right.

SB: It was, yeah, so there were some posters and things from, things from that in there, but the funny thing is that almost a lot of the people that I've interviewed, at least the ones that are still around here, Jeff Machota, who you probably know also, you know, I'll always say, “Oh, did you ever meet Jeff Glassman?” “Oh, I know Jeff.” So the mine workers in the Howard Bruhn orbit is still very much active. Did you work with Howard Bruhn at all?

HS: Well, Herbert.

SB: Herbert. Oh, geez. Goodness gracious. You're Howard. Oh, my goodness. I apologize.

HS: It's okay. Herbert. Yeah. Herbert Bruhn. I knew Herbert. His wife, Marianne Bruhn, was the director of the Guest in Residence program for a very long time.

SB: Oh, so she was an admin. She was an administrator at what?

HS: Well, if you told her she was an administrator, she'd get real mad. But she was in charge of the guest in residence. She was. Here's what they call artist in residence. And we changed it to guest because they said, well, everybody's an artist. And I said, the word artist is biasing the program towards artists. And we're not bringing in just artists. We're bringing in people who are artful in what they do. But they might be doing anything. Now, do you know the name Richard Powers?

SB: No, that doesn't ring a bell.

HS: Well, Richard was a Unit One original. National Book Award, Pulitzer Prize, and what's the other one?

SB: Oh, MacArthur's Fellow.

HS: Oh, yeah. He wrote the book called *Overstory*, which is one of his most recent novels. Well, he is heralded as one of the most important novelists of this century. He's in the law. And he came to U of I as a physics major and met his English mentor at Unit One and da, da, da, da. And

he and I, I didn't know, I met him because when he came back to U of I to be faculty, he associated with Unit One and I became friends with him then. Up until about a few years ago, he lived across the street. We're neighbors. His wife still lives. She commutes because he wanted to move to where the trees were. If you, his book is about, well, if you look up Richard Powers, you'll see. I don't like, sometimes you gotta bring up your well-known alums just to get credibility. I don't see it that way. Yeah. Okay, because one of the, there's three guys that put together YouTube and one of them at least was, you know, one. I didn't know him. I didn't know everybody. Yeah. Richard would have been Richard no matter what. This guy would have done YouTube no matter what. But what they found at Unit One was kindred spirits to be comfortable at U of I to do what they were going to do. It wasn't a funnel. Yeah. It was the same with Eboo. On the first day at U of I, he came to me and said, “Should I go to the University of Chicago? It's not too late.” And I said, “Probably, but if not, hang out with me and I'll shoot you in directions at East State.” Yeah. And but if you look up Eboo Patel, you'll find that stuff. But... Oh, so when they got, let's go back, when they had all its other programs, they wanted Unit One to look akin to the other programs. Not at all. Yeah, it's its own thing. We were a liberal arts college model. You know, when you go to a liberal arts college, you're expecting to do a lot of stuff. Not expected, but expecting. The school doesn't care what you do. But they got all this stuff for you to do, and a lot of kids do a lot of stuff.

Like at Grinnell, they have sailboats there. They have bicycles there. They go on, “You want to meet up on Saturday and go on this trip?” They have the nicest physical facility of any D3 program around because they're wealthy. They have faculty who will meet with you. There's no TAs. You know your faculty. When I asked my freshman class, “How much do you study a week?” About 7 hours. I asked my daughter at the time, a freshman at Grinnell. 30. How many papers do you write for my class? Outside of rep, your class is in. And you asked for too much. I asked for seven response papers. I need no good homework. Take what we've been talking about and make sense of it. No right or wrong of answers. And they didn't like that. Because I asked them to do so. It's a whole different way of going about school. And I wanted that, and that's valuable to me because that's where critical thinking comes in. Multiple choice test is how you know the facts. At a small school, there is an assumption that if I teach you the facts, you know them. Yeah. I want to make sense of them. You know, history isn't a bunch of facts. History, if you ever, did you take historiography classes?

SB: Yes, I did.

HS: Okay, so that's history. You know what I'm talking about. Yeah, that's right. How come this guy says this and this woman says this about the same thing. Oh, the Bible. Well, it was oral history for many, many, many centuries until it got written down. So there's a lot of interpretation and change along the way, you know, duh. So, and actually in the classes I taught, one of their assignments was to interview a regular faculty then, not TA. And I gave them quite, if you need guidance questions, here it is. And they have answers. “How'd you get here? What do you like about your job? What's your extracurriculars?” And these kids were so goofy. And one of the kids, and I sometimes I'd have to find someone to talk to. And a lot of times, after talking to them, the kid got, in some cases, they got jobs. Research assistants, you know, undergrad. This one kid interviewed his comp lit professor, and he said, “What do you do for fun?” She said, “I do roller derby,” and the kid didn't follow up on it. You're doing fucking roller derby? Isn't that interesting to you that your teacher has another life? Teachers don't always live at school.

SB: Huh?

HS: Teachers don't live at school like all the elementary school kids always used to live.

SB: Right, right.

HS: You know, you see them in the grocery store.

SB: In fact, one of my friends in the English department here came here from Grinnell. I said, “Well, why didn't you like it?” She says, “I did grocery shopping, and a student would come up to me to talk about the course I was teaching.” Shouldn't want to be that involved. I ran into, when I was a sophomore, I ran into, I was taking a history of U of I course with Daniel Rabin, and I was going to go see a movie, one of the Avengers movies with a bunch of friends. And, you know, we're in the theater and I hear somebody say, “Oh, hi, Spencer.” And it's Professor Rabin and her husband, who's also a professor, and their kid. I was like, “Oh, hi. Good to see you in that new class on Monday. So, what did you think of the movie?” And everyone else started laughing. But not nearly as common in Champaign as it would be elsewhere.

HS: My daughter who never [unintelligible], didn't come to class and the professor called her, “Are you okay?” She sounds just too sick to come. “Okay, as long as I know you're okay, in terms of that kind of stuff.” You don't get that kind of peace. Yeah. Or if you get it, you have to, you have to seek it out or deliberately plan your classes around. And I tell people, you advise a cafeteria and a small school is a restaurant. That's a good analogy. That's a good analogy. Yeah. Never heard that before. And you could become friends with a chef in the cafeteria, but you got to make the effort because they're not coming to you. But if you go to them, and I'd say to a student, “Go to their office hours.” And the students say, “Well, the only reason to go to office hours is if I don't understand it.” No. You go there and say, “I'm interested in what you're doing. What do you do? You know, how'd you get to where you are? If I want to be like you, what's the pathway?” That's an easy question for them to answer. And I also tell people, sit in the first row of a lecture, and they'll lecture to your yeses and noes. Why should anybody know that?

SB: Yeah.

HS: When my daughter taught at University of Texas, she said, “You can't have a laptop in class. If you need special permission, convince me, and then you sit in the last row so no one can look over your shoulder while you're shopping on Amazon. The notes are all online, and if you take notes in longhand, you learn them better. Here's the data.”

SB: Yeah, you do. It's true.

HS: That's what we're talking about. And it's, well, you know, as an aside, I really think that the institution of education has failed the United States. Yeah. My, you know, people say my opinion is what I go by, as opposed to the facts. And nothing wrong with having an opinion, but being able to back it up with facts or something like that is always the best. And it makes for a stronger argument, too. That's what I mean. Yeah. But... yeah, that was, and one of the things that Univer, that Unit One is, very frequently there was a hum of controversy at a political, social level that students talked about, and I liked that. Yeah. Then the place is home. And also to make friends that you can depend on emotionally and intellectually. Because that's what, student affairs is in charge of your affect and academic affairs is in charge of your intellect. But students don't think

of that themselves as bifurcating. This environment is the kind that pays attention to both. That's all there is to it. Yeah.

SB: When you mentioned, you know, having these political movements, the one I'm most familiar with is the anti-apartheid work in the '80s. But, you know, what other sorts of things was the community involved in?

HS: Oh, the whole Zionism thing started long ago. It's not a new phenomenon like some people think. And talks about the role of capitalism in life, the issues of inequality, you know, meritocracy versus some other form of equity. I got a higher ACT score. Why shouldn't that count? I said, “Well, ACT does have a socioeconomic correlate. The most important thing you did to get to college was to choose the right parents. That's the best correlate. Yeah. Success in life, but it's built on having the right parents. Yeah. And the right and the right influence growing up, which of course extends from the home. Yeah. Yeah.” And they look at me like, “Whatever you're talking about.” I say, “Okay, well, family income, having someone you can depend on.” Because I'm, you know, the one thing that really is a little, I think I told my mentor in the Urbana school district, and when they assign you to a mentor, it's a kid that needs an adult in their life. And in some cases, the kid's parents don't have time to pay attention to them because they're working more than one job just to grow. It's not, it's not purposeful neglect. And when I worked with the foster system, most of the parents wanted to be good parents. They just didn't know how. And/or drugs got the law. So the question is: At what level do you intervene in a family? What's more important, the kids' welfare or the constitution of a family? And that's not an easy one to figure out.

SB: No, certainly not.

HS: And we actually had…of course, it talked about legal issues in society, and a local lawyer who had an adjunct in the law school taught it. It's Quebec, I don't know if you know that name. Well, he was the lawyer of one of the basketball player that had the Kansas rape charge. Oh, Terrence Shannon. I think he was his lawyer. Oh, yeah. So he brings Julia Rice, who's the state's attorney, to class to talk. And he brings a public defender. So students got that there. We were able to bring in that kind of stuff. This is reality, no matter what. This is what the real world is all about. Just a second, I'm moving my computer to plug it in.

SB: Oh, yes. I just want to, while you're doing that, I want to mention, we're getting up on 2 hours here. Are you doing all right on time? Because I'm thinking that it might be wise for us to speak again a second time because they, if that would, if that would work.

HS: I'm sorry. Yeah. No, it'll work. I mean, I'm retired. Just gotta find a plug because I, otherwise it's going to all of a sudden turn us off. That's something goddamn plugs here. As an aside, I... I am also talking with, uh, just a sec, someone from the archives at the Chicago Historical Society on something completely different about my mom's stuff.

SB: Oh, that's cool.

HS: She's not U of I, but... there's a book that was written by some um women history professors on about 100 women who are important to Chicago's history and growth and my mom's in that one so da da da da da da. But anyways, yeah let's. How about this. I mean I can talk forever. You've seen that. If you want to talk again, get ahold of me and we'll find a time.

SB: Yeah, that sounds good. Because what I think I'm going to do is, you know, transcribe our conversation from today and then use that to build a second list of questions. You know, think of topics you touched on that I'm keen to find out more about and such like that. I should probably warn you that I actually just yesterday just got, just accepted a job that's not based here, but it is still for U of I system and records management. So I'm, so I'm anticipating still being able to do interviews also. So if you're booked up and stuff, you know, and me not being still fully employed, I think we'll be able to still find a way to speak and because I can do this virtually too.

HS: Yeah. And yes. So, like you said, we said, I have time. So we'll figure out something.

SB: Yeah, of course.

HS: That is clear to me the Unit One of the people you've interviewed is over. Yeah there's no, from what I've been told by someone who's still 100% on staff who I hired, there's no director, housing takes care of part of it, and the person from housing who's in charge is much closer to entry level and no experience with, that doesn't mean anything. I didn't have experience. That the academic program is very, very non… is very, very weak in terms of numbers and stuff like that. And basically, Unit One has, in my opinion, been homogenized to look like all the other programs. So rather than build them to be successful in terms of community, it's become more theme-oriented. And my prediction is that in the near future, Unit One will become a theme house, rather than a liberal arts college mock-up, which is or, or reflection. Now, that's pretty clear to me.

SB: That's the, that, that's what it's been trending towards.

SB: When they replaced Nora, Laura Haber, who directed Unit One in the model that she agreed with me.

SB: Because she worked, because you, you trained her. She worked for you.

HS: Right. Yeah. Um, the committee said, “We don't want another Laura. Whoever we hire, we don't want another Laura.” And that comes from a person on the committee, which means they wanted to change how things were. Yeah. My interpretation was to that mind. And one of the reasons I retired, I loved my job, and I was being told to start behaving in a way consistent with a different way of being. And put it this way, for many, many years, our brochure was merely a Xerox. It was nice, but it was a Xerox copy. And they made us have a glossy copy. There's the metaphor. Yeah. I was not a glossy copy guy. And someone else put it together and told us, this is how from now on you will be represented as opposed to the way you used to be. So how we were represented was taken away from us and given to someone else. Therefore, the someone else was telling us how you are going to be. And their model came from the student affairs housing model. RDs, RAs and type people. Yeah. As opposed, oh, where master’s in student affairs is the terminal degree, which everybody agrees. Oh, let's put it this way. One of my history professor friends said, “Those are people who will never take my course. Those people would be afraid to take my course.” She was rigorous. Yeah. Okay, you've got it. I did. And she wrote books on, um, whole house and stuff like that. Yeah. So with that, let's call it a day and get back to me if you want to talk.

SB: All right. That sounds good. Howie, this is, this has just been wonderful. And, you know, thank you very much for, for, for me personally, because I, I've been here, I think I

said I was an undergrad and then a grad school and now I've been employed here as a post-grad, and I'm staying within the family, so to speak, as a professional. So it's just such a treat to hear anyone's, to hear your perspective on the history of this place and the Unit One community. And I feel like I did not live there, although I did go to a couple of things there. But it's the more people I speak with, the more different things get filled in. And having your perspective is just wonderful. So I will sign off for now and...

HS: Was Harry Lieberson part of your history life?

SB: I never, I never took a class with him. I think he was retiring just as I was getting up towards classes.

HS: He and his wife were both active teachers at Unit One.

SB: They were, yeah. And uh…

HS: Mark Less, he, he died a while ago, so yeah.

SB: I know, I, I know his, I know his name though.

HS: Okay then. Find me when you want to talk in.

SB: All right, thank you. Goodbye now.

HS: Bye.