Lorrie Farrington Memoir

Farrington, Lorrie
Interview and memoir

UIS Alumni Sage Society

L. Farrington discusses her participation in the undergraduate interdisciplinary program in Environments & People, obtaining a teaching certificate, and graduating in the first class from SSU. She returned for a Master’s in English in 1980; her advisor was Communication Prof. Larry Smith. Some of her favorite professors included Norman Hinton, Judy Everson, and Jackie Jackson.

Interview by Bruce Strom, 2009
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Q. Today is January 14th at the Illinois State Library. This is an interview with Lorrie Farrington. The interviewer is Bruce Strom. Lori, how long have you lived in Springfield?

A. Yes, most of my life. Well, I grew up outside of Springfield and I’ve lived other places twice but I’ve been in Springfield most of my life.

Q. OK. What places have you been prior to coming back to Springfield?

A. Well I’m a farmer’s daughter from Farmersville, Illinois right down the road here, down the road a piece, as they say, about three miles south of here on Interstate 55 out in the country on a farm as I said. And then my parents put me on a train when I was sixteen and sent me to California. I lived there probably a year and went to high school there because I was sent there to help my sister babysit her child at night so that she could work at a hospital. Her husband was in the Air Force. And then came back home, graduated from my own high school and then went to the U of I, and so I lived in Urbana for a couple years. Then I’ve lived in New York City and I’ve lived in the Carbondale area. Oh my, I think that’s about it.

Q. So you have kind of a wide culture as far as places where you lived for awhile, a variety of different sizes of communities, different cultures.

A. Oh yeah. Yeah I was married to my – I married the man I met in California and he was in the Air Force. But we came back to Illinois and went to Urbana on the GI Bill, his GI Bill. I got married at eighteen and we went to school together and then he went into the Methodist ministry so and when he was in the ministry I lived at Loami, Illinois and Allerton, Illinois. And his ministry was a rural ministry so we lived in small towns and then I always wanted to live in New York City, ever since I was a child. But it didn’t work out too well, it was a culture shock. And it took all I could do just to make a living out there so I didn’t stay very long.

Q. Where did you graduate from high school?

A. Farmersville.

Q. Oh, from Farmersville.

A. Even though yeah, I had a semester or so out in California and then came back and finished up in Farmersville.

Q. Over the years – what are some of the interests, special interests or hobbies that you had?
A. Oh my. Hobbies I don’t know, I don’t really have time for hobbies, I say. I’m not a crafts person but I’ve always liked words. My mother was a stickler on good English in the house. She had been raised in St. Louis even though she was married to a farmer and she also got some education at Northern Illinois University way back in the 1920’s I think, which was kind of unusual. But she had – by having high school in St. Louis she was more like a city person and had been exposed to things that helped with her raising of us and made us – made me a little bit different maybe then a lot of the farmer’s kids. At least I always felt different. I don’t know why.

My parents wanted me to go to college. A lot of my classmates in high school really wanted to get married and have kids. So I took college prep classes in high school in order to go to college. So it was kind of a given even though one of my siblings had gone to college – I had five siblings – one of them went to college and another one was a nurse, had nurses training. The other two never had college. But it was just kind of a given that I would go to college. What did you ask me?

Q. What interests you had...

A. Oh!

Q. ...what kind of personal life...

A. Words, words.

Q. Words.

A. I guess just words. My mother always wanted me to be an English teacher and I never taught English until I was about sixty-five. I had an opportunity just in the last few years to teach English. I did get a master’s in English in 1980 from SSU. My bachelor’s was in – I got a teacher’s certificate along with one of the inter...the way you got a teacher’s certificate at SSU in 1970 was I signed up for the interdisciplinary program, if you remember, there were four programs that if you really didn’t know what you wanted to do. And at Urbana I had been in liberal arts so obviously leaning towards the arts rather than the sciences.

So I was in the Environments and People program, an interdisciplinary program at SSU for my bachelor’s and I also took teacher prep classes and was certified then to teach. Didn’t like teaching in the grade schools. I got a K though 12 and enjoyed my student teaching in so far as I got along great with the students but the administration – I just didn’t think it was for me, so I never taught. I taught a class at The Learning Community, an alternative school, one time and then never taught again until, like I said, I was much older.

So it’s always been words but I didn’t know that I was going to be a poet – never wanted to be a poet except in 1972 I took...well, I guess didn’t take creative writing classes until my master’s
program in the 1980’s, early 1980’s. But, I think I started writing and wrote my first poem about 1972 and recognized it as a poem. And I’ve been writing ever since. I’m not widely published; I’m too lazy to market my work. But now, I am doing that – I’m starting to get serious about it. I’ve been published several times but not on a national or world stage.

Q. Well you mentioned, Lorrie, you mentioned your degree at SSU but maybe you could review that. When did you begin course work at Sangamon State and what degree did you end up getting?

A. Well, I’d had two years at Urbana, in liberal arts and then we moved to Springfield. And I had children in the meantime and then when SSU opened I thought, “Oh my goodness! Here’s my chance. I can go back and finish my degree.” So I was in the first class and I think I had taken a couple of things at Lincoln Land just, you know, to have something to do. I wanted to finish my degree; that was my goal. And I liked what I was hearing about Sangamon State and was pleasantly surprised to find that the – it was relevant; education was relevant for the first time in my life.

I did not – I mean, I did all right at Urbana but I had to work so hard to keep a ‘B’ average, whereas in those years, 1954 or 1955, when I went there you had to be in the upper fourth of your class to get in so I... But I was competing with Chicago students and it was tough. Whereas at – and they were, you know, big lecture halls and not real small classrooms and just seemed kind of irrelevant to me. Oh, but I definitely had some good experiences at Urbana but when SSU opened and the classes were smaller and the instructors were more personable and the experiential learning really was my forte. I just felt like, “Oh, this is what is should be all about.”

Q. So what degree did you get and when did you get it?

A. In 1972 I was in the first graduating class. My degree was a BA in Environments and People. And of course the environment has always been a concern. You know, Rachel Carson or Carlson at that time came out with this Spring... what was the name of her book about spring? But anyway, the environment was starting to be an issue. We were starting to be aware that we needed to take care – my dad was a farmer and always believed he was a steward of the land, I think maybe from our church connection. The Bible says, you know, we’re just stewards of the land and that was my dad’s philosophy.

So I’ve had that sense all along about you know, that it’s a gift rather then something we can use and abuse. So the environment was a big part of my consciousness, but it wasn’t until – well, in those first years there were people, Larry Smith was a professor of communications, but he was also teaching in the teacher prep program. So through teacher prep I met people like Norman Hinton – I guess my three favorite professors were Larry Smith, Norman Hinton, and Judy Everson and I can’t leave out Jackie Jackson.

I think it was in those years I took a class with Jackie on ecological literature for children. And then Jackie and Judy Everson taught a PAC on the women’s liberation movement. And of
course I had, when I had my son I remember holding him in my arms and thinking, “War is wrong. War is just wrong.” I didn’t want my son to die in a war and I never joined NOW or women’s liberation groups, I’m not a joiner-type person. But I did – I didn’t join NOW but I did join Mothers for Peace. And you know, got literature and was aware of the movement and it affected – there were lots of movements going on at the time. Religion was up for grabs, I mean, the ‘God is Dead’ theologians were coming out. In fact, my husband and I left the ministry party because of all those – civil rights was happening, women’s lib, the church was in upheaval. It affected our lives and we left the ministry and ultimately were divorced too partially because of all those things happening.

Q. OK.

A. Did that answer the question?

Q. Yeah. I’m not sure if – would you clarify for me again what prompted you to get enrolled with SSU?

A. Because it was here.

Q. Because it was available.

A. I mean, I did – yeah it happened when I lived here and it was just a great opportunity to finish my degree.

Q. And then when you got familiar with it or went out there, you found that it was something much more to your liking then say University of Illinois’s style.

A. I thrived. I thrived and really, I feel like I’d been silent for thirty-five years of my life. I never really, I was a – I had an older sister whose shadow I kind of grew up in and I really didn’t express myself a lot. As a minister’s wife I had to play the role of a leader in terms of you know, church things – praying and leading meetings, and playing the organ, and singing, and all that stuff. But I didn’t really feel like it was – it wasn’t in my skin to do that. I could do it now but I didn’t like that and so I was playing a role it felt like by comparison. And then I started speaking out and started expressing myself at about thirty-five years of age. It was probably about the same time I was at SSU. It was good for me.

Q. Well you’ve kind of touched on this next question and that was, what are your early impressions of the University and campus or anything about the classes that might come to mind?

A. Well I was very impressed that Bob Spencer parked his car in the same place as we did.

Q. Oh, yeah.

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A. In other words, there was not a class-rule sort of kind of, you know.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. The faculty were just kind of one of us. They were there, they had some knowledge that we didn’t have but the way that they imparted that was more like getting us to think for ourselves. And I took the pass/fail because I thought that was really groovy. And I got written evaluations which you know, I did well in my classes because I loved them so much. So – but I didn’t have A’s or B’s or C’s but I always felt like I got mostly A’s because I worked hard. And then later, I was disappointed later when some of those pass/fail evaluations didn’t get sent to, for example, jobs that I interviewed for or things like that. So I don’t know, it broke down somehow many years later. I think it was intact for a long time.

Well the library, I think I remember going into the library and you could actually sit there and put a set of headphones on and go down in the media area and listen to music on your spare time. And... I don’t know, you could study in the library in a lounge chair. I mean, you know, I would find a corner in the library and – or maybe between classes – and read books you know, read my homework and do my homework in a relaxed atmosphere. I don’t know there was a lot of writing involved I guess. And it just – it was good for me.

Q. Were there certain instructors that really – I know you mentioned some earlier – but certain instructors that made impressions on you or were memorable and if so, why?

A. Well I think Larry Smith became my mentor, he was also my advisor. And I thought he was probably the smartest person I’d ever met. And next to him, well really alongside him Judy Everson and Norman Hinton. Norman just, I don’t know, Norman was kind of different than the other two but he was very intellectual and I just loved that, you know, just loved it. Judy I used to joke about her being a computer-head, she had so much information in her head. And of course she was a speech PhD, I mean her – so she could give a public speech and really change people. She used to write the governor’s – Edgar’s speeches. She – this brings me to this intersession where she introduced Arthur Clark from 2001: A Space Odyssey on these intersessions, and I took all of them that I could.

Arthur Clark came to the University and gave a speech and Judy introduced him. And I remember besides everything he said about space and time travel and all that there was a child crying in the – I mean I was kind of disappointed, Arthur Clark was this big figure, national figure, world-wide figure – and he pretty much stopped his speech and told the parents to take this child out of the room. I thought that was so weird! But it was disruptive. This child was crying and so he just asked them to please remove the crying child from the room. Well he had important things to say!

So that one and then one on astronomy – I never can remember this guy’s name, I always want to say Bartók but that’s a musician I think, I don’t know – but there’s some guy that talked about the dark, black holes – was there and I went to that one. Maybe Buckminster Fuller, the
geodesic dome guy? Anyway, all these famous people came to the campus and then we would have breakout sessions and you learned a lot in a condensed space, like a week of just intense choices that you had. You didn’t have to do any of this but it was a privilege. So I did those.

So I guess Larry, the communication thing, I really was very interested in a class and I still have the book — *Psycholinguistics* — and I tried later, to get into a PhD program at U of I in linguistics. It never happened and I don’t think I knew how to apply for a PhD program. You had to have contacts so to speak or professors that wrote you — I just didn’t know how to do it and I never got in. But Noam Chomsky was an author that wrote a lot and I remember part of what he said was that, “The Eskimos have about seven words for snow.” In other words, the psycholinguistics I’m not even sure if it explained it to this day but it was so intriguing to me that certain cultures don’t even have words for ‘war’ because they’re peaceable cultures. So language, in other words, language is linked to our concepts of our world and our universe and this idea that Eskimos had seven different words for different kinds of snow, we have one word for snow.

Q. Right. Snow is snow.

A. So language is important. And I said I was interested in words. I always said I was looking for the comma that changes the world, you know, because that’s how important words are to me. I think they’re a lot more powerful than swords. You know, that’s an old cliché but it’s true. Words can change the world.

Q. Where did you, where were your classes located? I know that the campus — you know, there’s the main campus and then there were classrooms in the downtown area — where were your classes?

A. I started out downtown in the First Methodist Church and the Leland Hotel — I don’t know, a matter of weeks maybe, a couple of months at the most. And then we moved out to the campus out in the cornfield. The classrooms I guess kind of looked like any classroom. There was one classroom that, had carpeting on different tiered levels and you sat on the edges of this — these tiers. I had a class on psychodrama I think in there and we — I think it was taught by John Nolte maybe. But then there was Guy Romans, I think we practiced acting. I also got in a play; I was in that first play. And oh my gosh, the city fathers didn’t like that very much at all because it was the assassination and something of Jean-Paul Marat, about the French Revolution.

And Guy Romans, he wasn’t one of my favorite people but he was definitely different — I think he was from France and he was the theater director and really stirred up the community by putting on this play. I remember him asking us one time at play practice if we were willing to appear on state naked because the protagonist Jean-Paul Marat was supposed to be in his bathtub without any clothes on, there was a scene in the movie — oh, things like that! I think most of us, well we didn’t have to, but he was just very controversial but of course the crowds
came! I mean, they had the something they called the Sangamon Sweethearts or something that supported the theater effort.

But of course there were some reviews and then – this is a different story but when we had the graduation and had the floppy hats there was a representative or a senator, Bill Horsley, who really got up in the air about these floppy hats. And the...you know, we were called communists and all kinds of things. I’m not sure he did but it created some stir because we were an alternative school. And as we attracted professors that wanted to be able to teach at a school where they weren’t pressured to publish, they were – their mandate was to teach – and it’s a very different emphasis. In other words, you get your students to really start thinking for themselves instead of just – I never looked at education as a ticket to a job, and probably because I’m an artist. I saw I guess, even though I had to declare a major in my master’s program, I am a big liberal arts person because I think liberal arts changes you inside.

That’s not to negate scientist people but for me liberal arts – my kids will say things like, “How do you have such an extensive vocabulary?” Well, it’s because I read a lot. My daughter got a degree in chemistry – well, you don’t read a lot of novels in chemistry. You know, so the kids, my kids are always – it’s not a joke in the family but they’re always talking about the words I use and to me they’re just normal words but that’s because I’m an English major. And my kids are always kind of referring to my vocabulary.

But now – my kids weren’t readers when they were little but when they got to a point in their lives when they wanted to know things they started reading and my son and my daughter now, too, started really seeing the value in reading. But it’s a need to know now that lead them to picking up books and reading them.

Q. Were there any special people along the way in your experience out at Sangamon State that – either professors or other students – that are especially memorable or maybe played an important part in your experience there?

A. Oh my! Stevens – well there’s Katie Eck was local and we got to know each other pretty well. I was trying to think – as far as other students, I really haven’t kept in touch with...but being in Springfield of course you see some of them. Karen Hasara was a classmate of mine. Homer Butler had an influence on me in that, when I went back for my master’s after I had gotten – I was in the middle of a divorce – and I went out there and got financial aid and worked in an office twenty hours a week as part of my financial package, my financial services package.

And then the second year, Homer Butler – I applied for a graduate assistantship. I kind of fell in, I think I applied kind of late but Homer Butler was very instrumental in linking me up with, a graduate assistantship which meant then that it paid my tuition and fees and I had an office and it was a much better way to go. I highly recommend it. And I remember somehow my paycheck got mixed up and I didn’t get paid the first time around. I remember going over to Homer’s office and crying because I hadn’t gotten paid. And he did what he had to do to make
sure I got paid because I was living as a single person at that time. Anyway, I did put myself through graduate school so Homer – let’s see, what else?

Caryl Moy, she’s a sex therapist now, I don’t know if she’s still retired. She was the wife of the dean of the medical school. But I took a PAC with her one time on – must have had something to do with sex, sexual revolution – and I thought it was so odd but the very first night of class she brought in hot fudge sundaes for all of us and said that was a sensual experience, eating a hot fudge sundae. I just didn’t get it! I think I do now because I love hot fudge sundaes but I couldn’t see the link between – I guess the idea that something that arouses your senses in her definition would be erotic I guess, or sexual. And so it broadened my view of things like that.

So in that class I remember missing – I don’t know if I was sick or had to go out of town – but I remember missing a movie on homosexuals. She showed this movie and I never did see that and I still don’t know. I’m still kind of curious about homosexuality I guess. So it was definitely an interesting class.

Q. You mentioned just now that you’d gotten, you did get a masters degree in [inaudible]

A. In, in literature. At the time they didn’t have a department of English.

Q. OK.

A. They had a literature degree and I took a – with it in terms of thinking of as a major and a minor – with a creative writing emphasis. I took all kinds of creative writing classes because by that time I saw myself as wanting to be a writer. And a couple of tutorials I took with Rich Shereikis, one of my tutorials was writing expository writing. That would be like non-fiction or it wouldn’t be creative fiction but, it was still expository writing and my goal for the tutorial was to get published and I did.

I got published, my first publication in Illinois Times I think, can’t remember what it was. But I actually got published and, I’m not sure if I took another tutorial with him or not but of course I took a lot of… in my graduate program I took a lot of poetry classes as surveyor or review of poetry and fell in love with Sylvia Plath – kind of a pathetic, well, she’s a renowned poet but, her life was very sad, with highlights.

Q. When did you complete your master’s?


Q. OK, oh in 1981, OK.

A. So, I’d still like to write a biography of Sylvia, she was married to the poet laureate of Great Britain, Ted Hughes. And, she and Anne Sexton had studied under Robert Lowell in Boston but both of those women committed suicide later. I just thought their lives were fascinating and –
but you know, trying to figure out what was the connection, not that there’s a connection between writing and suicide but what on earth, why are these people killing themselves? You know, it was just always a big question like I can’t fathom doing that.

Q. Were there, while you were attending the University were there any special places that you would attend like meeting places with other students or...?

A. Crow’s Mill.

Q. You were a Crow’s Mill person? One of those that enjoyed that...

A. Well, by the time I was in my master’s program – when I was in my B.A. program I was married and had two children and you know, a husband and a family so I really wasn’t, in on the extracurricular scene out there. And I don’t think there were any dorms, there was not any living in on campus at that time that I remember. So but by the time I was in my master’s program I can remember that yeah, every Friday I would allow myself to go out to Crow’s Mill on Friday night to see friends and they’d usually have a band out there and I’d get a pitcher of beer and share it with my friends and that my – because that’s all the money I had – was every Friday night. Because with the literature program, it was a lot of reading and writing so I took a speed reading class in order to get through all of my materials because it was just overwhelming and I wasn’t a fast reader so like, I learned to speed read in order to get through the literature program. But yeah, Crow’s Mill.

Q. OK, I know you’ve touched on a lot of things, kind of your impressions of the University, but I want to give you an opportunity to comment on anything like, I don’t know, grading, dress, philosophy, course work, courses offered, whatever comes to mind that in your mind sort of characterized the University and how you perceived it.

A. OK, well let’s see...

Q. Maybe you’ve already touched on some of those things.

A. I have. A lot of it, yeah, but there is one more thing. Larry Smith of course, was a communications PhD and he had offered a PAC one time that was called “Noise.” And the concept of the class was that anything that interrupts a communication is noise. And so we talked a lot about – well I mean there was lots of material in the class, I can’t remember it all but I thought that was interesting. Let’s see...

Q. Well, let me ask you something, sort of bringing it up to more current period. Do you use, do you find yourself using the University of engaging in activities at the University say, in the last five or ten years of your presence here in Springfield?

A. Yeah, once I left there with my degrees each time I never was a hanger-on, I didn’t hang around the University. In other words, a lot of people did. They loved that place so much, it
was a utopian community, so to speak. And – or a lot of people thought it was – and people just couldn’t divorce themselves from it at all. But I was not one of those, I wanted...

Q. Even though you seem though you seem to like really enjoy it...

A. I did!

Q. You really agreed with their approach, you still, when it was over it was over.

A. It was over. And I felt that way about jobs I had, I usually don’t go back.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. I don’t feel any need. But I did eventually work at the University later, just happenstance, really. So I’ve been yeah – I was on staff there for nine or ten years in the last few years and then I’m still on payroll part time even though I’m in retirement – I’m retired. Yeah, I used to go back in the period when I was not getting involved in women’s lib movements because I felt like I had experienced a lot of what women experienced so I went to men and masculinity conferences just to learn what men...so I did that.

They were sponsored by the University. Anything on leadership anything – I always went to the verbal arts festivals that the English department put on, saw a lot of famous writers and poets that would come to those. I think they don’t have the budget for a lot of that anymore and it’s a shame. But I always attended those. Robert Bly, a famous poet, I saw him more than once there.

And I did learn as I became or started getting published as a poet, I did learn from Robert Bly that when somebody recites poetry to you in a poetry reading, he would repeat stanzas. And it’s a, it’s a good tactic. I think a lot of clergy do that too – for emphasis they’ll repeat a sentence or a concept and Robert Bly did that a lot. I haven’t used the tool too much but I’m trying to learn. I do give a lot of poetry readings over the years and really when I started having my own poetry that I wrote I overcame my stage fright. So that was a big step for me because when you’ve got something to say that’s in your heart and you’re confidant, you know, it’s easier. I’m not saying I don’t get nervous before a reading but they’re coming a lot easier.

And, well somewhat – I still get a dry mouth every once and a while but when you first start out it’s kind of scary. But then once you get into it and then connecting with the audience is a big part of it. And I think that – I experimented with a lot of readings at first I would just read the poem and not say anything about it. And then I found it was kind of lacking and like I wasn’t sure people even knew what I was talking about. So now I’ll a lot of times tell how a poem came to be and try and engage the audience and you know, I’m definitely am a much better reader then I think I ever have been.
And I’ve kind of lived an adventurism life, so I have a lot of stories to tell, I’m a big story teller I think. But the real stories, like driving to Alaska by myself, things like that, camping in the woods on the way, and I ended up with a video – not a video, I took a camera and then Beatty TeleVisual made it into a video.

It really didn’t have movement but with their techniques – because I didn’t take a camcorder with me they took still photographs and made movement and put music to it and it’s kind of a record of my trip out there. I took a recorder with me and recorded because I was driving by myself the whole time so I didn’t really keep a journal but I recorded things and transcribed it later. I was nominated for poet laureate for the state of Illinois in the last four or five years. Is this what you asked me, these kinds of things?

Q. Well yeah, I think...

A. What did you ask me?

Q. Well I think I was just trying to get some sense of your, use of the campus or the University after graduating, I think it’s where we started that. But I think also the value to you – and I’m sure you feel there has been – value to you of having the, I’ll say the course work, the learning that took place, you know, carried over maybe into other parts of your life and maybe you’d like to just continue sort of sharing what that is about.

A. Right. Well like I said I never taught because I didn’t have, didn’t think that – well, the K through 12 was not for me. But I did teach at Lincoln Land and tried to be a personable kind of a teacher there like the teachers were at SSU for me. In other words, I wasn’t the kind of teacher that just stood up and spouted facts.

Q. So you taught at Lincoln Land Community College after graduating from...

A. Yes, right. Yeah, more really just recently in the last few years. I...

Q. And what courses are you – were you teaching?

A. Well I’m not now.

Q. Yes.

A. I kind of got off track I had some – well anyway. I was a medical transcriptionist for years because my first job with my B.A. was an administrative job and I realized that wasn’t for me, I didn’t like that. So I thought, “Well, I need a technical job in order to be able to write when I’m at home.” Like a technical job you could forget about at five o’clock and go home and then you had your avocation in addition to your vocation.
So I made my living as a medical transcriptionist for about thirty years, their medical vocabulary intrigued me and kept me interested. But, so once I could not transcribe anymore – where I was living on a lake there was no internet and the company I worked for at home once the SIU School of Medicine closed the transcription department, I went home to work and it came a point where I would have to have the internet in order to continue working.

So I got an opportunity to teach medical transcription online at Lincoln Land. And I did that for about five semesters and then I thought, “You know, I’ve got a master’s degree in English, why don’t I go to the English department?” So I went to the English department and taught a few more semesters, literature and freshmen comp. And then because I retired I had to lay out a semester and then I had a, accident in my eye – I had a hole in my eye and had to have two eye surgeries. And so I’ve just never gotten back into it.

But yeah, I really had a good experience teaching and I’m not sure if that’s all done but I’m writing a book right now because I got involved in the Barack Obama campaign and was hired on staff to go Cleveland. So now I’m writing a book about that and I’m really serious about getting it published so that’s what I’m doing now.

But the University, yeah, I think my first teaching experience really came at UIS. I taught high school seniors, a class on Lincoln and leadership, it just was one class, was one night, just a few hours, but that was a good experience. And they kind of got me over being afraid or shy about teaching. And it was a big success, I think. And it was on Lincoln and leadership, so yeah, I’m very interested in what makes a leader as opposed to a manager. In other words, I think a leader has a vision whereas a manager is moving people around and getting jobs done.

A leader – there’s another dimension to management that I’m interested in, and both of my kids are very much interested in leadership and what that means. So, anything out at the University that has to do with ongoing education in terms of what it means to have a life mission and to be able to put that forth in an organized way, that takes management and leadership.

Q. Well, we’ve covered an awful lot about your experience out at the University but I want to sort of maybe bring it to a close for you by inviting you to say whatever else you think might be interesting or that you want to make commentary on about the University or your experience there.

A. OK well I made some notes to trigger some ideas. But one of the things – and this relates to leadership – I went to New York one time and took my twelve year old granddaughter with me and we went down to the Today show out on the plaza there, Rockefeller Center – I’ll try to make this brief – but basically she was freezing to death, it was so cold, and I got tapped on the shoulder and said, “Would you like to come inside and be part of the studio audience?” And so I said, “Yes!” Well, we went inside and there was a big line waiting to get into the Later Today show which I didn’t know that’s what we – I thought we were going to be with Katie Couric and Matt Lauer.
So the *Later Today* show was with Florence Henderson and a gal from Jamaica – I can’t remember her name. But anyway, in that studio audience several things happened that were a good example to my granddaughter. And she was at the stage where she was trying to look good and everything and I was just trying to keep warm. I got in a dialogue with Florence Henderson before the show was being taped because she asked the audience, “Well, where are you all from?” And nobody said anything so I told her where I was from and so we started talking and she said afterwards you can come up and get pictures and an autograph and everything. So my granddaughter was interested in that because she watched all the reruns of *The Brady Bunch*. Whatever.

And then there was another little section of the show where they had a marketing person there with a display on a coffee table of last minute Christmas shopping gifts. And so this woman came up to our section of the audience – Asha Blake, I think was her name – and said, “Is there anything down there that any of you would like?” And nobody said anything so I said, “Well that cashmere bra kind of interests me.” And she said, “Well, when we get to that part of the show I’ll have you ask for it or something.”

So anyway, basically what happened was she came back and she said, “Well no, I’m going to have you come down to where we are and get the bra.” And then she came back a third time and said, “And when the show’s over you’ll have to give the bra back.” So I was just a plant in the audience. But, basically what I’m trying to say is my granddaughter was so embarrassed. She said, “Oh Grandma, you’re embarrassing me!” And I said, “Jessie, whatever – everything that’s happened to us today is because I reached out for it. If I had just sat there,” – and I said when the time came, in the show for us to go down, the lights came on, the cameraman put the camera right in our face and I said, she was included in that.

And I said none of that would have happened if I hadn’t reached out for it. It was presented to the whole audience, and I was the only one that reached out for it. And of course we told our kids to watch – they didn’t know about this show but they were watching at home. So I thought that was a lesson for her, about what it means to be a leader or just a vital person – reach out for what’s there.

So that was, I think that’s significant and...I guess the editing business. I’ve done a lot of editing as a result of my education at SSU. I like editing almost as much as writing because you get in the mind of another person. And as a good editor you can influence – not that that’s your goal, what you’re trying to do is get the writer, bring out the best in the writer but you help them. So that’s why it’s so much fun. I guess the Barack Obama, being hired on staff at my age, I’m seventy-one, and it was a big boost in my life to know that I could withstand the rigors. We worked seven days a week, fourteen hours a day, no breaks and I did it.

Of course his philosophy is you don’t quit once you’ve won. There’s still work to be done and it just keeps going on and on. So I’m a process kind of a person. I’m not linier like beginnings and ends, it’s kind of the journey. So I think that’s what I got out of my education. It just reinforced...
how I really had always felt about the world but was too shy to stand up and say. The arts are very important, as well as the science. And you know it takes all of us to put it together and make it a good place to be, a good place to live. So, I don’t think I have anything else to say.

Q. Well, you’ve given us a lot of information here. Anything, anything coming to mind before we close up?

A. Well, I got one more thing. I did try for – I wanted a PhD and I tried one more time to get in a post-graduate process at Emerson College in Boston. I went out there for an interview; it was a masters of fine arts which is an end degree. There’s no, I mean, it’s the equivalent to a PhD because that’s the end of it. But I got on the wait list and my housemate said – I started to throw the letter away and he said, “Oh no! It’s a big deal to be on the wait list!” That means if they fill the class up and somebody can’t come or something, you still could get called. So that was a big part of my life; that was a loss of my life. So those are some of the – plus raising a family. I think having wonderful kids is what life’s all about. I don’t – well not that people who don’t have kids aren’t significant but for me, that’s a big part of my life, having beautiful kids.

Q. OK.

A. OK.

Q. Well, thank you very much. Again this was, this is the completion of an interview with Lorrie Farrington on January 14th, 2009. The interviewer is Bruce Strom.

End of Interview

47 minutes 43 seconds