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Willis (Bill) Logan Memoir

Logan, Willis (Bill)

Interview and memoir
digital audio file, 54 min., 24 pp.

UIS Alumni Sage Society

Logan enrolled at Sangamon State University in 1970 at the downtown registration center set up in the Myers Building. He wanted to go into public service and so wanted to attend the new public affairs school opening in Springfield. He was able to take CLEP courses that brought him up to junior level so he could begin his undergraduate degree in psychology. Logan worked for Governor Jim Edgar and several mayors of Springfield, including Telford, Ossie Langfelder and Karen Hasara.

Interview by Cullom Davis, 2009

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Narrator: Willis (Bill) Logan
Date: October 10, 2009
Place: Springfield, IL
Interviewer: Cullom Davis

Q. This is an oral history interview on October 30, 2009 with Willis (Bill) Logan, and the interviewer is Cullom Davis. And we're talking about your years and experiences and relationships at what was then called Sangamon State University. Give me a little background, Bill. Did you grow up in Springfield?

A. I was born and raised here in Springfield, St. John's Hospital in 1943, so...

Q. 1943.

A. ...this is my home.

Q. It is and it's been your home.

A. That's right.

Q. All along?

A. That is correct.

Q. Now so in 1970 you were about twenty-seven years old.

A. Correct.

Q. And what had been your schooling up to that time?

A. I had graduated from Feitshen's High School in the city of Springfield in 1961. And from there I went to Western Illinois University where I went to school for about a year, and I wanted to party and to have fun. And I didn't want to get my grade, so I didn't. And so I wound up out of school before June came and I wanted to work and get a pretty car and get all of those things and of course which is what I did. I immediately... well, I went back to work at Allis Chalmers, where I had...

Q. You had worked at one time?

A. I had worked at Allis Chalmers, and when I went to the... I went to Allis Chalmers to work and then when I got... in 1965, I was drafted.

Q. Ok.

Logan

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A. And I learned a lot and sort of grew up in the service. And when I got out of the service, I no longer wanted to do mundane factory work. I wanted to do something. I didn't know what I wanted to do. I heard all these exciting things about a new public affairs university that was thinking about coming to Springfield. And I thought, "You know I need to get my degree."

I didn't do it when I first had the chance but I want to do that. It's one of the things always kind of was in the back of my mind because I always felt like you know if I don't do that, I will feel like I never really accomplished anything.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. And I want to finish something. I want to be known as finishing something. So you can't imagine my anticipation of a university coming to town, and I made all the necessary preparations. As a matter of fact, I was married at the time and my wife and I had a young child and so every... obviously this was a big decision on my part because what I wanted to do was to go to school full time. I didn't want to go at night so I didn't want to mess around for years and years. I wanted to go and get the college experience plus I wanted to get it over with.

Q. Right. That was asking a lot.

A. It is asking a lot. My wife had to be convinced that that was going to work, so we spent some time... I was glad we did. We spent a lot of time trying to determine how we were going to make ends meet and I was determined to go to school full time. We worked it out between my father helping out and my wife had a job already, so that was income. And then the GI bill was just wonderful for me.

Q. I hadn't thought of that.

A. And it worked out perfectly and so I had everything really laid out for me by the time that I decided that when SSU opens up I'll be right there. So that's kind of...

Q. So timing couldn't have in a way been better.

A. It couldn't have been better. I don't know that I could have done it further out; I don't think I could have done it earlier.

Q. Right.

A. So you know, so it worked out. It's almost like it was just perfect for me.

Q. I remember meeting you, I'm sure it was in the spring of 1970. I forget exactly how, but you made quite an impression on me. I wasn't admitting students, but we did meet in the Myers Building under some circumstances. So tell me as you read about and heard about this new

university and you mentioned public affairs university. Was that of special interest to you or just a curiosity?

A. That was of special interest to me. As a matter of fact I had contemplated going back to school and I had really thought first of all about going to Western Illinois University. I had been there before, I was comfortable there, and I was comfortable making that decision. But when I heard that this new institution was going to be a public affairs school or potential of, I was at the time in 19... when I came back to Springfield from the service, what are the things that I really thought about, "I've got to get into public service in some kind of way."

Q. Ok.

A. And I want to help the east side. I don't know how. So we started a minority newspaper called "The Spirit of Black Springfield."

Q. Ok.

A. And the... so I started really to get involved in a lot of things that way, so one of the early classes that really interested me was Black History obviously.

Q. Sure.

A. Judy Everson was one of my favorites, so I think I took all the classes she taught. But the whole public affairs thing really interested me and I also was wanting to ultimately go into public life. At the time I was working at Allis Chalmers and I started working at the bank.

Q. What bank was that?

A. Illinois National Bank. And Mr. Van Meter wanted me to go into banking as a career, sent me to school and so on. And I played with that and played with that and I decided, I went back to see him and said, "You know what, the Urban League is looking for a community organizer."

Q. Aha.

A. "And Mr. Van Meter, I think banking probably would have been a very interesting career." It probably would have been. But I decided to go to the Urban League. So at the... about the time that this was all... this was all in the same period of time, 1969, 1970, all of that period of time, and so it just was perfect for me. So now your public affairs university has come into being, I can be a student. I'm going into public affairs. My whole public life now is starting to take form.

Q. You had a job with the Urban League?

A. I had a job with the Urban League.

Q. Not full time?

A. Yes, it was. As a matter of fact what happened was, the Community Action Agency under Theresa Cummings and the Urban League under Comer Cox came together and said, "Let's create a position that we'll both split in half. The Urban League will contribute half the salary. The Community Action Agency will contribute half the salary." I'd be located in the Community Action Agency building because if you remember Comer Cox didn't have much of an office in those days.

Q. No, right.

A. And so I'd be located there and I'd work full time as a community organizer and that is what I did. I didn't know anything about being a community organizer, so going to school at SSU, talking, meeting all kinds of different people and so on really helped me in determining a lot of things.

Q. I see that.

A. So it was... I'm just excited to be doing this because I feel so personally in touch with stuff. As a matter of fact I had a difficult time with my... and I've never done it. I wanted to in one sense of me I wanted to change when it became UIS and everybody had the opportunity to sign up for, I was torn between it because Sangamon State meant so much to me and I've never changed it on my degree.

Q. A lot of students wanted that because of the credentials.

A. And I understand that.

Q. Yeah, sure.

A. And that's perfectly fine and it may have even helped me at the time but I did not... I didn't... there was just such an attachment for me to that name Sangamon State that meant so much to me that I couldn't force myself to do it, and I never did.

Q. So it was really not a turning point because you had made some decisions, but it was a major initiative on your part for your credentials that you would need to pursue a career in public service.

A. Major, major difference, major difference. Now it was a life changing experience for me, it really was.

Q. Yes, but it wasn't a bolt out of the sky.

A. I had been thinking about this.

Q. And your father...

A. That's right. I had been thinking about these things, but the actual experience itself was such a boon for me.

Q. Now so you started in the fall of 1970?

A. Right, absolutely as soon as the doors opened.

Q. Wasn't that a little bit... not disheartening but I mean it was real pioneering out there.

A. Absolutely. I mean I remember Quonsets very well. I remember the old days of course and you do, too. And we were just starting and I understood that and I... it never seemed to make any difference. The people were all enthusiastic and or least the ones I met. People wanted to do things and I met Ron Sakolsky and Mike Townsend and Cullom Davis and Mike Ayers and Judy Everson, David Everson and all these guys... all these guys you know made a... influenced me in some way.

Larry Golden and all these guys you know that I came in contact with, they touched my life in different kind of ways and you know I was just... I was having a ball. I was having just a great time and I was glad that I did it full time because then I could really get into it. I could really adopt the spirit of being a student, which I hadn't had enough of because my days at Western were cut short.

Q. But you said it was mostly evenings you were taking classes?

A. I was taking daytime classes. I was a full time student when I took classes, most of them in the day, had a daily schedule.

Q. Good.

A. So I was right there with all of the rest of the youngsters. And as a matter of fact we weren't all that young because we had, it was really a mature you know college.

Q. Exactly. You were about the median age, 27, 28.

A. Right, I didn't... I thought that I was going to feel out of place because I thought, "Well, what is that, he's going back to school, he's going to be with all these kids." And it was quite different than that.

Q. That's right.

A. There were many people in the class that were older than me.

Q. Oh, absolutely.

A. And some younger than me but that was not a problem. You know, all over campus that was just not a problem.

Q. And there were a lot of veterans, too.

A. A lot of veterans.

Q. Had you met with them?

A. I did not but I knew a lot of them... and a lot of the veterans went to the school as well.

Q. Right, right.

A. I mean it was just nothing, everything about it to me was perfect including the fact that it was new and including the fact that it seemed like we were you know growing all together. And I thought Bob Spencer did a good job of trying to maintain a sort of a... you know we used to meet at the student union outside sometimes. I mean it was just kind of one family kind of a thing that brought it personal, so it was that kind of like that for me.

Q. Were you a member of the university senate?

A. At one time I was.

Q. I thought so maybe.

A. But one time I was.

Q. And Roger Sweet was very active.

A. Very active in that and I wasn't...

Q. Phil Bradley?

A. Phil Bradley obviously and I got to know those guys really well.

Q. Right.

A. There at the university because I didn't know Roger Sweet before.

Q. Right.

A. I didn't know... I mean we still, I've maintained some great contacts with them. I mean Roger's dead now but I'm mean... Jim De Kroger and I went to... had classes together and good friend of mine. And I know there was many athletes, I've forgotten names now but I was friends with them because of the experiences that we had.

Q. Now you had only spent like a year at Western. Did you have to take some courses?

A. I did. No, I didn't. I CLEP'd them.

Q. Oh, you CLEP'd in, good.

A. I took... I found out that, that was part of my research and I found out that if you could pass these tests, you might be able to gain entrance that way. So I did and I passed the tests with flying colors. And so I came out and everybody said, "Nope, not a problem; you can be a student here." And so I kind of did the hard stuff all at once but I needed to so that was good. I did go take some courses at Lincoln Land.

Q. Oh, you did?

A. But I didn't have to. I did because I wanted to and they helped me as well.

Q. Ok. Well now you've mentioned Judy and you probably took as many courses as she offered. Why don't you talk a little bit about Judy? What made her such a good teacher?

A. I thought she was... I hadn't had a black history course before so I was not familiar with it as a subject matter and Judy made it live for me. She was seemingly enthusiastic and she was charming and she was witty and she made us think and she made us work. And I enjoyed, her enthusiasm really helped me and she was so bubbly about things and so you know this short little white woman and I'm in the dark and she's here out to here at the time.

It's the 1970s but it's our 1960s; it was the 1960s for me. And so here was Judy Everson and I mean you could... I used to laugh at the difference but she... it was so heartening to have her be the person who taught me black history and I just loved her, I just loved her. I loved her and David, too, by the way because I had a great time in those classes.

As a matter of fact, she told me, she'd always call me on me to do whatever and I would be like that again and she at one point told me, you know you're going to be able to teach this course when I get through with you. You're going to be able to teach it. And I think she was... she came pretty close to having to do that, so it was really fun.

Q. Good, good. Now you mentioned Mike Townsend. Did you take any community action courses with him?

A. I did and I needed to. He taught me about Saul Alinsky and all kind of community organizing kind of things and that was good for me because when I first started on the job, I didn't have any training in that effort and there was nobody else at that agency that did either.

Q. No, exactly.

A. So it was like, well what the heck does a community organizer do now that you guys have hired me.

Q. Right.

A. And I'm going, well let me tell you what I'm going to do. I'm going to find out and I'm going to... and so I'd come back from classes and tell them about all the things that we had talked about and learned and all the avenues that were open to me as a result. So it was really ...

Q. Had you known Mike before?

A. No, no.

Q. I know he worked here for Brother... St. James...

A. Yeah, he did. And I didn't know that. I did not know that. Sangamon State kind of brought us together.

Q. That's good. Did you take any courses with Ron Sakolsky?

A. You know what? I don't remember taking any courses from Ron. Ron and I got to be really pretty close because I liked to talk to him about the interactive, you know, the things that were going on in the community and... Sangamon State I think if you remember and I'm sure you do in the early days it kind of got a reputation as being a little radical (laughter).

And here I was you know meeting with all of these radical folk who looked differently than these people in Springfield looked I mean. And so I said, I liked it, I wore a dashiki every day, I had hair out to here and Ron had all this long hair and all that you know. So being different was exciting to me and so Ron and I... and I might have taken a course from Ron because he and I got to be really good friends.

Q. Sure, sure.

A. And so I might have taken a course from him, I don't remember.

Q. But you did visit.

A. Oh, we did. We talked all the time about one thing or another and he always wanted to know what we were doing and I always wanted to know what they were doing and vice versa so it was really interesting. It seemed like, seemed like I thought Ron was against everything, everything wrong, everything to get riled against. So it was... it had an influence on me although I didn't want to go that far so... but it was just a heck of a time.

Q. Do you ever... we didn't have many black faculty. One of them was Gus Stevens. Did you know Gus?

A. Knew Gus well. As a matter of fact, I met him early on as well and he said, he told me, he said, "Look I want you to do me a favor" because he knew that we were active in Springfield.

Q. Yeah.

A. And so he said, "Look as I bring black candidates to the school, I'd like for you to meet them." And so I met Homer Butler and Gus Stevens and others. You know it was, I don't know that he thought of it as an interview and I thought of it as simply an opportunity to get to know them, an opportunity to tell them about Springfield and they...

Q. Which they needed to hear.

A. Where do you get your hair cut? Where do you, you know... and as a consequence, I knew most of them quite well. Dr. Morgan, Mark Conley.

Q. That's right.

A. Otis Morgan, Connelly, Gus, Homer, we all got to be really quite... to be really friends. And there's another guy that I can't think of his name; he ran around with Mark Conley. I can't think of his name.

Q. Not Mel Hall?

A. No. I don't remember his name. If I... I did know the faculty pretty much, pretty well at that time.

Q. So you were a, to them you were a useful contact with the community.

A. Absolutely.

Q. And could give the candidates a reality shot.

A. Absolutely, absolutely. And did just that with all of them actually and so it turned out to be really a great relationship.

Q. Now do you remember, I'm going to get to some particulars now. You were ready to enroll. Did you actually visit that admissions office they had downtown on Washington?

A. I did, I did.

Q. Ok. Talk to somebody?

A. I did; I don't remember names now, but I did. I was not... you know I had to go through this process before I was admitted, so I kind of went through a different kind of thing than most normal students just going to start.

Q. Who started you on your path at the university? Was it Judy? Not Judy?

A. I don't think it was Judy. I don't remember.

Q. I don't remember either.

A. It might have been Homer, might have been Homer but I don't really remember.

Q. Ok, because that was a new idea.

A. That was a new idea and I had to... I had to... I was surprised that there were those who wanted to know how I did, what did I think of it, what was it, was it helpful, I mean a number of things I was kind of surprised by that. And it could have been Homer but I don't remember exactly who it was.

Q. I'm trying to think. Was that credit for life experience, something like that? Life experience programs, something?

A. Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Q. And so they had to interview you about your military service, your jobs, your schooling, and then try to give some... give some sort of equivalent undergraduate credit.

A. Right, right. And I wound up after I got my undergraduate degree and I got it in psychology by the way.

Q. Oh yeah, I was going to ask you.

A. Also one of the things that I liked about the early years was that you know we not only talked about the things you just mentioned, but we talked in terms of what kind of curriculum would I... would interest me.

Q. Yeah, sure.

A. And so we came up with this name of social psychology is what we called it.

Q. Ok, uh-huh.

A. And I was really impressed by the fact that I can create a discipline and I only say that to a couple people. I don't put social psychology in there although because most people don't know what that is and I'm not sure...

Q. It's not wacky by any means.

A. No, no.

Q. It is a field, but it wasn't a major.

A. Ok, ok and so psychology would be my major. But I was very thrilled by having, knowing myself better with social psychology that we came up with as a result of talking about the CLEP, talking about my experiences, talking about what my desires, talk about what I really wanted to do, what my interests were, and what I wanted to do career wise and all of that had to do with all those things so it was really important.

Q. Sure. Actually for a guy who was interested in public service and community action, social psychology makes sense.

A. Was a...

Q. And they teach courses in social psychology. I don't know if we taught them at the university, but we had some sociologists like Ted Cloak and we had psychologists. I don't know, do you remember any of your psychology professors?

A. No, but I did have Ted Cloak.

Q. You did have Ted Cloak?

A. I did have Ted and I don't exactly remember what I had... I think I had him for a psych course of some sort.

Q. Maybe.

A. Of some sort, I don't remember.

Q. Make he make any particular impression on you?

A. Ted Cloak, I liked Ted. Ted he... one of the things that I never got through with Ted was Ted wanted me to write better and he always tried to get me to take writing more seriously. I really wish I had. That's what I really remember most about Ted was that he turned out to be very right in what he wanted us to do. Now he wanted me to really focus in some areas that he felt I could do, that I could be quite strong in and I was more on the other side.

I liked to speak, I liked to... you know I liked to go into organizational management, I liked to do stuff like that, public administration and all those kind of things. And so I learned as time went on that and I often think of Ted when I think back about both Sangamon State and some... all of the things, experiences that Ted is very much a part of that.

Q. Ok. Did you take any courses with John Miller?

A. No.

Q. Remember John? You didn't know him? He was... also he had an administrative job as kind of head of psychology services, a counseling service. You didn't know him?

A. I didn't know him.

Q. Or Bob Crowley?

A. Oh, yeah. I had a lot of interaction with Bob in terms of my sole psych. And I did have him a little, he taught.

Q. Right.

A. And I did have him as an instructor. Glad you mentioned that because I do remember that now but I lost touch with his name. I had forgotten Bob's name but I had a lot to do with him.

Q. He's really formal in his teaching, but he... And you didn't take any political studies classes then that you can remember?

A. No, I don't...

Q. In state government?

A. No, no. I didn't but I did want to take some because I came back to get my master's degree. I didn't finish it but I started one and I wanted to go into public relations, but I wanted to take some courses in government and I never did.

Q. You were busy.

A. I did, I was.

Q. In office and all sorts of things. Are there people who you might have taken courses with, not David Everson.

A. Who was in philosophy?

Q. Well, Larry Shiner.

A. I remember Larry.

Q. Conald Foust.

A. I had him in and interestingly enough all of these things that I wanted to do I just by accident... well not quite by accident but I decided to take a course in philosophy as one of the things I wanted to do.

Q. Sure.

A. And nothing was so interesting to me as philosophy.

Q. Really.

A. I loved it and when we started you know John Paul Sartre got to be my favorite guy and Professor Foust was right there with me and I loved philosophy.

Q. That's great.

A. I didn't... I never knew that I would love, would like it so much and so it would up being my minor as a result. But I just loved it and I loved him and I loved the classes that we had. It was just wonderful and here I was spending so much time in psych and learning about public service and all of that kind of stuff and then I was being introduced to philosophy and really thinking it had no rhyme nor reason to it, just take it. And it really, it turned out to be you know...

Q. It shows you have an appreciation for abstract things as well as concrete things.

A. I just... I mean I just loved it.

Q. Good. There was one thing I meant to ask you about, it'll come back to me at some point. No mathematics?

A. No.

Q. No sciences?

A. No.

Q. But you also talk about Bob Spencer. You got to know Bob personally?

A. Got to know him. I thought Bob was an interesting man. I really, I really thought he was good to, a good steward as far as the first president was concerned. And I thought he really had a good feel for being a small time, really small town university setting with its people, with its... with us being the prairie stars but the heart of the prairie with... he impressed me as being an academic but at the same time a good practitioner in terms of... I thought he really was able to communicate well. I thought he really wanted to communicate well and I thought his heart was in the right place and I thought that he was a good fit for being the first president.

Q. I agree because he had great ideas. It was a little harder for him to manage this university because we were all pretty contrary individuals but he had wonderful educational ideas.

A. I thought so, too.

Q. And you know he used to say and this is appropriate to you. He used to say, "Everyone who wants to be a really good citizen ought to be elected to something like that." And even more important, how to be real at it, he said there's the issue... and you have them.

A. But you know and I have been saying that ever since I heard him say that, made an impression on me and I tell everybody now, you know what? I think everybody in this town ought to get out and run for something at least once.

Q. Right.

A. But I got that from him and I believe it, I really do. I believe it humbles you in a way that you never really thought of before. And when you go through that experience, you figure things out.

Q. Was there any, back in those early years, were there any unofficial political parties on campus? Was there a Republican group? Was there a Democratic group?

A. There was all kinds of groups but I never really got involved with them. We tried to have a Black Student Association. I mean there were a lot of things that we did hit and miss at. I think we did, I remember working with the Black Student Association that we got here to Springfield. He's President of the Urban League now... President of the Urban League.

Q. Oh, I can't think of his name.

A. Anyway...

Q. Current president of the...

A. Uh-huh, he's the President. He's not the Executive Director, he's the President. I cannot think of his name.

Q. But you got him here to speak, to the city of Springfield.

A. We got him here to the city of Springfield and we got to spent a day with him. There were quite a few of us and I think Dr. Morgan and Homer, myself, a number of other students, we just spent a good day with... he was elected to office in the south. He was part of the contingent, democrat contingent that ran Daley and them out of the convention and they took over and his name came up for president. I can't remember what his name is to save my soul.

Q. Right. There was an Atlanta, Georgia meeting of blacks who was successful in office. I'm blanking, too.

A. But he was... he... I'm going to think of his name. I'm going to think of his name and call you back.

Q. Ok, fair enough.

A. Because I know that it will come to me.

Q. Now were you that close to Homer? I mean did you really...

A. Homer and I really got to be close. You know I thought he... he went through so much tragedy and stuff. And I always thought he didn't deserve it. He said he was always such a nice man.

Q. Upbeat.

A. And upbeat; he never... you know even with his days of tragedy, Homer just never would let you down, always was... I mean I just admired him a lot. I loved being around him because he was so upbeat and didn't let you be sad, just wouldn't let you be sad. And I thought he was the best fit for the student activities guy that we all went to.

Q. Perfect.

A. And he helped anybody and he'd sit down and you'd talk your problems out with him. You know he'd look over at you with those big eyes and big glasses he'd get and say, "What's wrong with you?" And he totally was so soft spoken and had that laugh, a great laugh and I will always remember him.

Q. Now I guess I'm being a little difficult here but here must have been some frustrating or disappointing experiences at the university.

A. Well...

Q. If you don't want to name names you don't have to, but it's no harm.

A. I also ran into, I ran into a lot of movements that I didn't like and that I didn't want to be associated with.

Q. Radical?

A. Radical. I didn't like the... Larry got me involved in it and Larry's still involved in it and wants everybody to join in the... what was the group?

Q. Springfield. Defendents.

A. Yeah, yeah.

Q. The Innocence Project?

A. No, no, not that one. The group that... national, national organization; he's very involved in it. It's the group that... I think they're steeped in the Constitution. I think they... I can't remember. But anyway, I had some unpleasant experiences with them and I didn't...

Q. Larry is a very intense guy.

A. Larry is a very intense guy. I have come to really appreciate and respect and admire Larry over the years and I think that even he has grown as a result of a lot of things that have happened. And now he and I are really good, good friends.

Q. Well that's great.

A. And that's really worked out really well. I listen to him when he comes up with things. I think he has great ideas and he's a man of his word and he also will speak his mind. I think those are great traits in all.

Q. I agree. I admire him. I mean we haven't always agreed.

A. Sure, sure. He's probably one of the best examples for me as to, how to disagree and not be disagreeable.

Q. Sure.

A. He's been really good at that.

Q. Now what about any encounters you had on campus or with particular individuals of absolute racism.

A. And I had those experiences, too.

Q. You did? Were they students or faculty?

A. As a student, another student. I had a run in with a... I was... I got to be pretty vocal myself.

Q. Oh really.

A. In class and there was a... and there were times when we generated some heated discussions about matters that when I look back on it now, we needed to have some discussions about those.

Q. Sure.

A. But I don't remember you know the exact name of the individual who probably should remain nameless. But he said the magic word, as it were in a class that we were in and I was... and I was talking about white folks and I was talking about this and that and the other. And he finally had enough and so we almost went to fisticuffs. We almost went to fisticuffs. I thought I could fight then, but I'm glad there was a room full of people there actually because they wouldn't let it go that far.

Q. It was very intense, sounds like.

A. It was very intense. And I thought you know our university and I think of Sangamon State that way as our university you know we were pretty well known for having a lot of radical conversations anyway so it probably went with the territory after awhile. But it got pretty intense with he and I there for awhile.

Q. It sounds it, sounds it. I just remember that you said you took a course in black history with Judy. Remember there were several summers when she and Chris Breiseth and others offered for teachers a summer interracial institute or something. You didn't participate in that?

A. Right. I didn't and I wish I had. I wish I had now but I didn't.

Q. Because that became pretty famous.

A. It sure was, it sure was. And I would have benefited from that as well, in particularly with Judy involved. And I didn't get involved, so I can't...

Q. Any other involvements you had on campus?

A. You know I think that we had a basketball team at one time. And Homer and me and Connelly, and I think Gus even tried to play. I don't think Gus could play no basketball, but there was a number other students involved, too. And Fate Echolys was on our team. Fate and I took some courses together.

Q. Yes, in fact I think I met him and you together.

A. Yes, you did. Yeah, you did.

Q. I think you both showed up at the Myers Building in dashikis. I was really impressed.

A. That's right, that's exactly right. Fate and I were together and did... I remember that, I remember that. But Fate was on our basketball team, and I'm not sure, we got uniforms. We played in... what gym did we play in? Lincoln Land? Oh, I can't remember. I can remember playing inside but I don't remember exactly where we played at. I know we played about twelve or thirteen games that one year we all played and had a great time, had a great time.

Q. Good.

A. We weren't very good but we just enjoyed playing so much until we just... come snow, I mean you know whatever it was we'd be right there. And we always had time afterwards to go by somebody's house or stop at the little bar down the street or something.

Q. Like Lake Springfield Tavern?

A. That's right, that's right. Lake Springfield Tavern and there was another one over there by the Sangamon State that we would go to, used to go to. Can't remember the name.

Q. Off the interstate?

A. Yeah, off the interstate, right. I can't remember the name of that little place, but we were frequent members. We went there frequently.

Q. Yes.

A. You know before I forget it, too, one night we were there. We went in after a basketball game and we were all having fun and the waitress came up and she said you know to me. She said, "I would like to see some identification." Well I didn't have any identification on me. So I said and I had ordered a beer and I said, "Well I don't want the beer." I want the beer, but I don't want to... So they then said something to the girl and she got upset.

So they got into an argument and the manager came out and all of us including all our Sangamon State friends, they were all right there and we got into this big argument. They called the county sheriff's office, and they called the county sheriffs out and it happened to be

that I knew one of the officers on the force. And so we got it all kind of taken care of, but that got kind of intent for a minute or two but the guys from... you know here they were professors and all of us were out there and they were right in there with us. They were right with us.

Q. That was very comforting, wasn't it?

A. That was very comforting. I thought, "You guys don't need to get into any trouble now."

Q. Well you didn't either.

A. I didn't, that's right, we all didn't.

Q. Well it certainly didn't look like you were under age.

A. I was trying, I was 28 or something like that. And you know... and I wasn't really hurt about it. They was, so they took up this battle for me. I think he felt like he had to. I think he thought that the lady was being discriminatory. Although she didn't ask them for any id; she simply asked me.

Q. Well sounds a little suspicious.

A. And they didn't like that.

Q. He may well have been right.

A. He may well have been but I don't know. But I do remember that incident and thought I would mention it because we all were present at that time.

Q. So you finished in a couple years?

A. I did.

Q. Good.

A. And I had, I finished. As a matter of fact I was asked at that time if I would be the Director of the Human Relations Commission for the city. And the mayor at the time was Telford.

Q. Telford, right.

A. And Mayor Telford called me and said, "You know you've got a degree. I said, "I got one from Sangamon State." He said, "Right on, that will work and I want you to be the next director." And he hired me pretty much right there and I thought, when I went home, I thought, "This Sangamon State thing is paying off already."

Q. Well good for you.

A. And so that was really the start back then of going on to... I worked for almost every mayor as a result of that. And you know my future with Karen Hasara, everybody, including Langfelder for awhile. But then Jim Edgar as Governor and I worked for him when he was Secretary of State and then governor. And then I came back to be head of the Housing Authority. So I thought that my little time that I spent at Sangamon State University was tremendously important for me, for my career, for my family and so on. So I'm really happy to do this because it was such a great thing for me.

Q. Well I'm glad to hear that. We're almost through. We're going to have to switch the tape over if you don't mind.

A. No problem.

Q. Ok, this is continuing an oral history interview with Willis Bill Logan on October 30th. You had just talked about your association with most of the mayors since...

A. Graduated in 1970.

Q. Mayor Telford and the various jobs you've held and you've spoken very generously about how you can credit the university with... although it was your own drive also obviously, made a difference. Have you stayed in touch with university people?

A. No. I wanted to be on the... and I've always wanted to be, on the former student association.

Q. Alumni?

A. Alumni, yeah. And Faith and I both... when they used to meet long, long time ago out to the... out to that little village out there, can't remember what house it is now but it's a little historic site kind of thing.

Q. Oh, Clayville?

A. Clayville.

Q. Ok.

A. When they had early meetings, early on at Clayville and for some reason I never felt comfortable with them. I never felt like... I never did feel like inclusive.

Q. You were the only black at these things?

A. I was, Faith went with me a couple of times, but most of the time I went by myself. I was never comfortable and so I never really got involved. I wanted to be. I wanted to be because I certainly wanted to give back because of the individual were so real to me. But I never felt like they wanted me to be there. And for some reason I never let that stop me before, but for some reason, I didn't. I wasn't anxious to go after awhile and so I kind of just...

Q. I understand that, sure.

A. So it never really happened. Now when the past president...

Q. Naomi?

A. Naomi. When Naomi came, Naomi asked me to be on her advisory board.

Q. Oh, all right.

A. So of course I was ready to do that.

Q. That's a high level thing.

A. That was. The people who were on that, the mayor was on that, but it was a really good opportunity for me to return and to do some things.

Q. Sure, sure.

A. Because I didn't get involved in the Clayville organization and I wanted to do something... I always wanted to do something for the university, so I was there until Naomi left, so that was good, I had a good time. So I was there at the... when we were talking about taking freshman, sophomores, name change, sort of establish a relationship with the University of Illinois, and so I really felt like I was participating in the issues that led to where the university's going. And I you know, it was good to see that from where it had come from, from where my time was spent in the Quonset huts and how you'd go out and get lost in the buildings. It was kind of fun to do those things.

Q. It's kind of amazing, isn't it?

A. It's amazing. It's just totally amazing.

Q. But when you had a chance even though you were not a student then to see Naomi Lynn up close, you have an assessment of her?

A. I was absolutely loved, I thought her ideas were really great. I thought she was really good for the university. She you know, she... I thought she was really taking on way more really than she could chew but she's... she did not let down, she didn't back up, and for all of the people

who didn't want her to accomplish where she wanted to go, she had made a way to get to deal with all of that. I thought that was fantastic.

Q. She was very deft as a political leader, very sensible.

A. Very much so, very much so. She... I liked the way... I liked her style, I liked her approach. And she knew that she was traveling in waters that were kind of shaky, kind of rocky, but she never let that impede here. And she was also very good at working with those people who didn't agree with her.

She would develop strategy and we'd talk about it sometimes about dealing with Lincoln Land and the whole problem of... I can understand her being the only college in town, they get the freshman and sophomore. They didn't want us getting them. I mean and they're right here. And all of the issues that she had to handle, she just really handled them well. And as a result of that, we accomplished a lot. And so I really liked her.

Q. Well that was a crucial period in the university, kind of almost rebirth. I think of it as a rebirth ten years ago and you were present at the creation, at both births.

A. Both, right and I was so glad to be because she asked me to be part of that.

Q. I'm sure you were an excellent sounding board.

A. Oh, well, it was really fun. It was really a lot of fun and it validated my own excuse for not staying involved. And so I really felt like I was contributing at any rate, so it was really fabulous.

Q. Well I think you've already talked about your debt and your involvement so we don't have to do a recap on that. And unless there's some sort of parting words you want to make, we'll just leave it at that.

A. Well I don't. I thank you; I think this has been really tremendous. And also the... I can't really put into words how meaningful I think my whole experience has been with Sangamon State from then until now at UIS. I thank God I have seen and witnessed some wonderful things happen that just... the journey itself from the Quonset huts to the great buildings that are out there now, it was really... you know it's hard to imagine... I really enjoy meeting some of my friends.

I was with Jim Diekroeger the other day and Jim and I were... when I run into somebody like that, I always go back to Sangamon State. We always go back to our days at Sangamon State when we were playing ping pong or running Homer around or his secretary. What was her name? Delores, Delores Harris and she had to put up with all of us because when we weren't in class, we were harassing her and trying to get her playing ping pong or whatever it was that we were into at the time.

And it's just, it was some great days. I just can't believe it is 40 years. I don't even want to believe that, but time has gone by. But so much has happened, so many great things have happened and feel it's really been a great part of my life to have been... and still, and still is even today. I thank you for this opportunity.

Q. Well thank you very much. It's been a great joy to do this.

54 minutes 51 seconds

End of Interview