

University of Illinois at Springfield

Norris L. Brookens Library

Archives/Special Collections

Cheryl Peck Memoir

Peck, Cheryl

Interview and memoir

Digital Audio File, 56 min., 17 pp.

UIS Alumni Sage Society

Peck recently retired as Public Relations Director for the University of Illinois Springfield. She attended the upper division only Sangamon State University as a nontraditional part time student to get a degree in English while she worked as a newspaper reporter in Decatur, IL. She took classes with Judy Everson, Proshanta Nandi, and Rich Shereikis and later became a graduate assistant for Mike Lennon while continuing her education in English, earning a master's degree. The opportunity arose for her to work at SSU in the Public Relations department and enjoyed the "glorious ride," as Peck refers to her years of service at the university.

Interview by Mary Caroline Mitchell, 2010

OPEN

No collateral file

Archives/Special Collections LIB 144
University of Illinois at Springfield
One University Plaza, MS BRK 140
Springfield IL 62703-5407

© 2010, University of Illinois Board of Trustees

Narrator: Cheryl Peck
Date: March 2, 2010
Place: Springfield, Illinois
Interviewer: Mary Caroline Mitchell

Q. This is March, 2, 2010, and I'm doing an oral history with alumni Cheryl Peck. This is Mary Caroline Mitchell with the Alumni Association. Cheryl, I know you have had a dual kind of role here on the campus, but from our perspective, your degrees from UIS/SSU are the part I really want to talk with you about. I wondered if you would reflect about your higher education and what kind of education you had before enrolling at SSU.

A. I had an education that was spotty. I had gone to college out of high school and spent more than three years at Illinois State University in Normal where I was pursuing a degree in physical education. I was at that time very athletic, and I thought that was going to be just the thing I wanted to do with my life. I was encouraged in that direction.

But I wasn't a very good student back then, and I had a lot of things that preoccupied me. It was the early 1960s, and it was just about the time when talk was starting to begin about establishing Sangamon State University.

So I left college and started a career in the newspaper business without a degree. I had a lot of college credits, but I didn't actually have a bachelor's. Eventually I ended up in the newsroom at the Decatur Herald and Review where most of the people around me had bachelor's degrees, not always in journalism but at least they had received a degree. I don't think it ever really affected my ability to write and to edit because I spent almost 23 years at that newspaper. But it did affect the way I felt about myself.

And very early on, back when I was about thirty years old, I came back to Sangamon State to try to work on my coursework and decide what major I wanted to pursue. I was interested in English, although I thought that was a little over my head, and I was also interested in communications.

So I spent some time taking coursework and I still didn't quite know. I was working full time and kind of enjoying my life at that point, but I was still worried about not having a degree. It almost became an unattainable kind of situation where I thought, "This is something I'm never going to be able to do."

But eventually in the 1980s, I came back yet another time to Sangamon State and at that time, it actually did take. I took some communication courses; I took some English courses, which was then called literature. I decided literature was the thing that I really wanted to do, I wanted to spend my time with.

At that time, the English program here at SSU was very strong. People like Judy Everson, Michael Lennon, Rich Shereikis, Dennis Camp, John Knoepfle and others were excellent teachers devoted to their students in a way that I'm sure other faculty across the campus were as well. But they took a special interest in me because they knew that I was serious now.

I had a nice career in another town and commuted to campus – the kind of student the university was created for where students come back either as transfers or nontraditional students and who need to finish their degrees or want to take coursework and had holes in their education, which I certainly did.

I didn't have a lack of ambition at that point. I was really determined that I was going to succeed as a student. Judy Everson, in particular, and Michael Lennon were people who I admired and who really encouraged me, and I studied like a demon. When I wasn't working, I was studying. English required a lot of reading and writing, and it really helped me with my writing and editing, and I really poured myself into it. I can remember how encouraging they were and how I could take coursework at night if I needed to because the way the courses were planned, it accommodated the hours that students could be here.

I was surrounded by other people sort of like me who were coming back from different institutions after being away from school for... most of them for a long time. They were in their 30s and 40s; some were even older than that. They made an interesting mix of people to come to know and to listen to the kinds of experiences that they'd had and to bring that all to the classroom.

I started succeeding as a student, and I owe it all to a university that was established in kind of a strange way – this upper division model that nobody quite understood except for those of us who were here – a junior/senior graduate level model. We were ideal for that, and the faculty understood us in terms of where we were in our lives and what we were trying to accomplish. Generally speaking, we were much more serious as students.

Q. I was wondering if you could think back to that day or how it was that you're in Decatur, working at a newspaper, you are driving distance of a lot of universities – some right there in Decatur – how did you find out about Sangamon State? And what was the year that you learned about it? And what was it that attracted you to Sangamon State rather than going back to ISU or one of the colleges in your area?

A. Well, for one thing, when I finally did come back in I guess it was the 1980s, I had already been here earlier.

Q. Well when was the first time?

A. The first time I was here taking coursework was in the 1970s, like when the university was still young. I took some coursework then, and I really wasn't that devoted to it at that point.

Q. How did you learn about it?

A. I learned about it because a friend of mine had graduated from here and had gone on to do other things. And also occasionally there would be things in the news about it, some not always so good. But nevertheless, I decided that because it could accommodate my needs in terms of the hours it offered coursework because I had to drive over here and I didn't always have the luxury of being available in the daytime, although I went to work in the evenings most of the time so I did take a lot of day courses.

Q. I bet it was pretty empty when you took a day course.

A. It was indeed, (laughter) it was a pretty empty place. But my focus then was just in the classroom doing what I needed to do, going to the library sometimes. Basically though, it was just like so many other nontraditional students; I came to campus, I took my coursework, and I left. There was no campus life, I mean for me there wasn't, and there was very little otherwise either. But I didn't think about the campus as I eventually came to think about it in much larger terms in all of its many facets.

I was very focused just like so many other students were at that time. I was succeeding because I was more determined, but also because I can't emphasize this enough, the faculty were so attuned to students like me and so encouraging. And not easy on us, but they challenged us. I can remember sometimes staying up all night long at the newspaper office after putting out the daily newspaper and using the computer to write my papers. I would still be there in the morning sometimes when the telephone operator would come to work. That's how devoted I was to my studies at that point. I was in my early forties by this time.

Q. When you came in the 1970s, did you just take a course every so often?

A. Yes, I did.

Q. OK. Were they for credit then?

A. They were; they were for credit.

Q. Do you remember how you enrolled? Who did you meet with? Who was the first person you met here?

A. I honestly don't remember that. I don't remember.

Q. Was there a catalog that you looked at?

A. No, there was some sort of a schedule that I looked at. But those early years are very dim in my memory now.

Q. Ok, do you remember where you came to class? Was it here, was it still downtown?

A. No, I took coursework out here.

Q. Ok.

A. I took some coursework in what they used to call temporary buildings down on the east side of campus.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. I took a course... Oh, I do remember taking a sociology course from Proshanta Nandi at the Leland Building downtown. I also took an English course in new journalism from Michael Lennon at the Leland Building downtown. Those were my early memories, and I did pretty well with that coursework. But I still wasn't ready to commit myself to really getting back on track in terms of a degree.

Q. Did the classroom look like other classrooms that you had gone to school in? Were there desks?

A. Yes, there were desks. Much earlier in time, I know that students didn't even meet in classrooms and sometimes they would meet outside or in the faculty member's home or something like that. I never experienced that.

Q. Would you say that the instructors that you had were fairly traditional in their teaching methods?

A. Yes, I would.

Q. Ok.

A. Yes, I would. There might have been a few exceptions over the whole course of my time here, but most of them were pretty traditional and pretty rigorous, I might add.

Q. I have heard that people were not aware of what the requirements were for a degree in the early years. When you came here, were you just counting how many hours you needed to get a degree?

A. Yes, I was. I had so many hours that I had previously accumulated. Some of those didn't transfer, but most of them did. I had junior standing but there was still a lot of course work to take just on a piecemeal basis. And of course, I hadn't been a student in several years and I had real doubts and questions about my ability to succeed like so many other students did.

Q. What I hear you saying is that your impression of the campus was not the physical campus but the faculty members that you encountered. Is that right?

A. That's exactly right.

Q. And that your opinion of this university was most affected by the interaction you had with your faculty member.

A. It was the first time in my academic life where I really interacted with faculty. Eventually I took tutorials with Judy Everson right there in her office, which was an experience all unto itself. It was very intense and I would record as we are recording this conversation – every word she said. This was my own option; she didn't require this. Then I would go home and listen to everything again.

She would give midterms that were take home, and it was the perfect example of how take homes can be much more rigorous than in class. I would spend up to 30 hours working on these. Now this was my own pace, but I'm telling you this to illustrate how serious I was as a student at that point.

Q. What year was that?

A. 1986.

Q. OK and how many years then would you say that you were a student on and off?

A. Well that's a good question. I was a student and a graduate assistant eventually for probably at least five years if you were to put it all together and this was just upper division. Well no, I'm counting the master's work.

Q. OK, well for your undergraduate degree.

A. It took me about...

Q. Did you come here on and off for five years to get that?

A. Probably about that because I was taking two courses at a time, but when I started my master's, now that's something that I had never conceived of as far as going on for a master's.

Q. Who encouraged you?

A. Judy Everson encouraged me to do that, and it was like opening doors for me all the time. And then eventually encouraging me to leave my job at the newspaper and become a graduate assistant here. To leave a full time job at that point when I had no other means of support was a big deal, but I did it because Mike Lennon encouraged me. He wanted me to be his graduate

assistant in the Office of Public Affairs Communication. It was the precursor to the Institute for Public Affairs, which is now the Center for State Policy and Leadership. It's changed names over time.

I quit a full time job in another city to come here to be a graduate assistant. There again that was another experience I had of the university although now it was much more intimate because I was actually here during that time while I worked on my master's. I also worked on a video about the renovation of the Lincoln Home; that was in the late 1980s.

I also helped edit the book that Robert Howard wrote about the governors of Illinois, called *Mostly Good and Competent Men*. So I was getting experience that I would never have gotten anywhere else. I also did some work on trying to improve the appearance and readability of the catalog for the university. It gave me the opportunity to actually work in the environment, in an environment I had never been in before except as a student.

Q. So as a graduate assistant, how many courses would you carry?

A. I would carry two a semester.

Q. And then work full time?

A. No, I would work twenty hours a week as a graduate assistant, and then I would commute back and forth. That was all I could handle.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. The English courses were pretty intense. There was a lot of reading, and I couldn't handle more than two a semester. So it was a fairly slow process; I was a graduate assistant for 14 months. And the reason I left (because I could have been here for a full two years) was that I got a job in higher ed [education], which was totally unexpected.

I have to admit that while I was here as a graduate assistant, I was a little worried about what I was going to do next because I had no job prospects. Michael Lennon kept saying to me, "Don't worry about it. Just immerse yourself in this time, this wonderful time of study and something will happen." Well, sure enough, it did.

I became the Assistant to the Chancellor of the Board of Regents, which was the governing board for the university at that time. Their offices were located downtown in the Myers Brothers building. I spent almost four years there after getting my master's, learning about higher ed and the organizational structure of it and all of the special qualities that make up this kind of atmosphere.

Then I got to know Naomi Lynn who was a candidate for President. I wrote her letters because, in the board office, I was charged with communicating with her about various logistics. We got

to know each other that way, and eventually she asked me to come and work for her so one thing led to another.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Many, many significant times in my life have been about this university and what's it done for me.

Q. Did you graduate with your bachelor's degree? Did you attend a commencement ceremony and what do you remember about that?

A. What I remember about that is that I didn't. I was working that day, and I did not come to the graduation. However, when it came to my master's, I don't know whether I would have attended that ceremony or not but they designated me as the Program Marshall. I wasn't going to miss that for anything, which was a great honor.

Q. And where was that held?

A. It was held in Sangamon Auditorium back when they had two ceremonies, one in the morning and one in the afternoon. Everything had to be repeated, which was not an easy thing to do.

Q. Do you remember who the commencement speaker was?

A. Oh, I wish I did now.

Q. No?

A. No I don't remember.

Q. Uh-huh. Who was the Chancellor, who was the President then?

A. The President then was Naomi Lynn. No, no, the President when I graduated was Durward Long, beleaguered Durward Long, I might add (laughter). Maybe by the time I actually did walk across the stage, he had been removed from the campus,. They had set him up in an office in the Board of Regents.

Q. You have described some of your most memorable professors, but I wonder if you could just pick two out of all of your experiences with instructors on this campus and just talk a little bit more about what was special about them and what you learned from them.

A. The first person who comes to mind is Judy Everson, who the first day I sat in her class was probably in the early 1980s. It was a course called "Literature between the Wars," and I was mesmerized by her style, by her passion, by the way she would present the material. She

made me fall in love with literature in a way I had never known. I'd always had a kind of a leaning obviously toward language and literature, but she made it come alive for me. I literally sat on the edge of my seat. I remember this, and I was just completely taken with the way she opened up this world of literature to her students.

Q. We didn't have PowerPoint in those days.

A. No PowerPoint. She was more powerful than any PowerPoint.

Q. Would she lecture for four hours?

A. No.

Q. How did that work?

A. Well actually, the course I was taking from her at that point was in the afternoon, so it wasn't one of those long, three-plus hour courses in the evening. She was very, very aware of her students. You could not be in a Judy Everson class without being part of it. She liked interaction and would always devote a part of every class to students, to asking questions, to stimulating a discussion about the book we were reading or the author we were talking about.

You just knew that you were not going to sit in her class and say nothing, not that I wanted to particularly. It was the first time that I really felt comfortable interacting, too, in a class where I really wanted to take part because I had prepared, and I was enthusiastic about the subject matter. Not everyone felt that way; it was really beyond a grade, although of course I always wanted to get an A, but it was about taking part in this wonderful stimulating discussion that she would bring out of us.

She was so well prepared for every class that it was as if her whole life was just devoted to making us understand more about what this book was about, what this novel was about, and what the author was about. She would give us these long wonderful pictures of the author in words. I didn't understand Faulkner, for example, and she would make him accessible. It was just like opening up windows and letting air in.

Q. How many people would be in a class like that?

A. Well, actually there were quite a few as I recall. These were not terribly small classes. They weren't large by any means; I would say 20 students at least. I'd been in smaller classes than that, but her classes usually filled up.

Q. Uh-huh. Name another faculty member who was memorable.

A. Well, another faculty member who just absolutely... he was like an actor on the stage every time that he would walk into a classroom, was Mike Lennon, who became the publisher of

Illinois Issues magazine and eventually went on to be vice-president of a university or a college in Pennsylvania. Mike had great passion for his subject and was able to convey that to his students.

There are faculty who are very bright and know their subjects very well but don't have that ability to convey that enthusiasm and knowledge to their students. Both Judy and Mike had a gift. I took a Shakespeare course from Mike Lennon, for example, that was very interesting. Eventually I went to work for Mike Lennon, and that was a trip in itself because it wasn't unusual for him to be quoting great authors every day just off the top of his head. He would quote, and it was always relevant, of course.

It always amazed me that his brother was a great Thomas Hardy fan, and I never knew much about Thomas Hardy. But Mike Lennon wanted me to read Henry James. Well, Henry James is not the most accessible author in the world, but I read Henry James and we would talk about it. He made me feel as if I could do anything, that I had the ability to learn difficult subject matter. I could analyze and interpret authors. He taught me how to do literary criticism as did Judy. In midlife, it opened up this whole new world to me.

Also, another faculty member that I will always remember was the fearsome Rich Shereikis. Rich Shereikis was a big, burly man who had a great command of the English language but who didn't tolerate students who he felt were not well prepared, and that is an understatement. He had a reputation for being very tough and very fearsome, and he also didn't mind dressing you down in class.

I remember one course in particular, I took more than one course from him, but he was a Dickens' scholar. He had written his doctoral dissertation on Charles Dickens. I took a seminar at the master's level from him on Dickens, which was extraordinarily wonderful. It started out with about ten students, but there were only about five of us with our backs to the wall by the time the course ended.

There was one particular student in the class who he didn't think was well prepared. He dressed her down right in front of all of us. It was like being scolded by a very harsh parent. We knew that would be our fate if we didn't come to class well prepared and able to talk about what we'd read. I studied like a demon and did well because I did study, but he tolerated no foolishness.

Q. Did you have any bad experiences with faculty?

A. Actually, I don't remember any bad experiences at all with faculty. In fact, I got to know faculty outside of the English program because I took the colloquium, the Public Affairs Colloquium. I can remember taking one from Mattilou Catchpole about analyzing health surveys. I took another from the chemist, Gary Trammel, about biological and chemical warfare. These are subjects I never would have known anything about, so I had pretty good experiences overall. I don't remember ever having a bad experience.

Q. You are coming from a press background to this university. What was your impression of the community's impression of this place, which I understand may have been a little different than what you're describing right now in terms of your experience here.

A. What I was saying about my experience here as a student was that this university worked perfectly for me. It knew how to serve and still does know how to serve, nontraditional students – students that have their careers and have holes in their education or that want to finish something that they started earlier. I'm a perfect example of that working exactly the way it was supposed to work.

Now when I came here as the Director of Public Relations in 2002 after having been in the board office for four years, I discovered building an image for this campus was a very different kind of experience because so many people didn't understand what we were doing out here. I knew perfectly well, as did many other people who actually took part and took advantage of getting their educations here, but people didn't understand what an upper division university was. Many thought it was a community college, kind of an elaborate community college.

As a PR professional at the university, I was forever having to explain what we were. Add to that, on top of that a kind of carryover from this university's beginnings in the 1970s it really was an idea that came out of the 1960s, the tumultuous 1960s that turned many, many people off in this community, this very conservative community because many of the faculty were sort of victims of their own time or they were subjects of their own time.

They were radical activists; it was a very different time then. I don't know that anybody can look at the history of this campus and not fully understand what it is to know that we were born out of that era of civil rights unrest, and Vietnam, and all kinds of clashes between conservative and liberal. In the very early years, the university wrote in its blue memo about student riots because that was a time when students routinely rioted on campus. But that never came to be here because it wasn't the students who were liberal generally speaking, it was the faculty. They set a tone out here that really turned a lot of people off, and people couldn't relate.

I'm only saying this because as the PR person many, many years later, I was still dealing with this, this impression that what we're doing out here is kind of wacky when I knew for a fact that what we were trying to do out here in the 1980s and 1990s was very different from what had occurred in the early years, that we were by necessity moving to a more traditional kind of campus. That really came to be true in 1995 when we became the University of Illinois at Springfield.

I consider it yet another privilege related to this university that I was here at that time when that enormous change took place, that Sangamon State University was melded into this enormous, well-thought-of, high-quality university, and many people were very resentful about

that. From a PR standpoint, I thought it was wonderful because it gave us immediate credibility, which we had struggled so hard to find and have before.

But many people were worried we would lose that distinctive flavor of the campus and all that which made us unique. Well some of that, like innovative coursework and alternative governance and naming things like Conveners instead of Chairs and schools instead of colleges and on and on, was something that didn't translate very well in the real world. When people left here, nobody else knew what they were talking about. I think it was also a very anti-administrative kind of campus where the faculty really wanted to run the place, and that had to change to some extent for it to work as the years went on.

So I thought what happened 15 years ago when this university became part of the University of Illinois was what made it survive. Otherwise, I'm not sure what would have happened to it, quite frankly. I think it was going along in a booby-trapped way that we kept stumbling over ourselves trying to make things work. Our geography was such that it made it difficult. What was happening in the bigger world when we were established made it difficult. And so, quite frankly, I think it's amazing that this university has survived in the fashion that it has.

Q. I was hearing you describe your educational experience. That sounded very conventional, that you could have taken these courses at any strong liberal arts college in the nation and it would have stood up, but you also are saying that that took place in a context that was nontraditional, but you didn't feel that when you came to campus that you were in a radical environment.

A. No, I didn't feel that way at all. In fact, quite to the contrary, I was so focused on what was happening in the classroom and my interactions with faculty and then going home to study or go to work. I knew about some of the things that had taken place out here, but by the time I got here, which was in the 1980s, things had settled down to quite a great extent.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. When I came here as a PR professional, there was very little campus life. Well, when I was here as a student before that, there was very little campus life because nobody stayed on campus.

Q. Well I wondered, did you get to know the people in your classroom though because of the discussion groups?

A. Yes.

Q. Do you still keep in touch with some of those people?

A. Not really. I did meet a lot of people at that time, but I didn't live here in Springfield.

Q. Right.

A. So I would go off to another city after I was done here. I do remember Bev Scobell; we took our English coursework together.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. But not really, I don't remember too many people. But I do remember that it was a good experience because I think other people brought a lot to the classroom. And they still do, these nontraditional students.

Q. Did they have University Week when you were here? Or you mentioned the colloquia, do you remember intersessions?

A. I do remember intersessions. I didn't take part in any of them.

Q. Ok.

A. I don't remember any university events at all.

Q. Ok.

A. They likely were going on, and there were some students living on campus at that time. But I was so focused elsewhere that it's like I was extracting something from this campus and taking it away with me but not staying here to enjoy or take part in any other activities.

Q. Did you ever eat on the campus?

A. I think I probably did, but that's back when the cafeteria was down in this... well actually this part of campus, the east part of campus, so not really.

Q. What was the library like?

A. I've always had very fond memories of the library. The library was established so differently from other libraries in that it was very focused on students' instruction. In the beginning there was a faculty member assigned to every single program, and it's still very oriented toward instruction. I found that faculty to be very accessible, helpful. Of course, that's back when there were card catalogs and no computers (laughter). I always thought it was a darn good library for a university of this size. I also used Millikin's library a lot because it was easy and convenient.

Q. Uh-huh, Uh-huh.

A. I'm so used to talking about this university in its entirety, it is harder to talk about me as an individual in it. But I do think that its survival in the last few years has been, has not rested on nontraditional students, although I think we still have a lot of them and they may still be the majority of our students. It's the online education we provide now, plus the lower division, which the university finally got. Thanks to Naomi Lynn who worked very, very hard, over many years to actually make that happen.

Q. One of the questions that we always ask is, "What has your education meant to you?" I think you started out this interview with that, but I wondered if there were any other thoughts you had about what this place has meant in your life.

A. Helping me succeed as a student was huge. Then as a graduate assistant, which gave me a sort of a step toward another career. Then to finish my master's, then having a full-time job and a darn good job over almost two decades. To really learn more about the university and become immersed in it, was extremely significant in my life because I came from an entirely different environment, entire different city, an occupation, a profession – newspaper business – which helped give me the background for what I eventually did here.

I've met many, many people, but I think working in this environment made me very proud because while there are things wrong with this university, there are an awful lot of things that are right with it. The kind of people it attracts are the kind of people I like to be around, both staff and faculty. I consider myself extraordinarily lucky to have this university and to be here at a time when it was growing and going through pains instead of just being an established traditional university. Sometimes I yearned for that, but most of the time I didn't. I'd yearn for that when Matt Hale came to campus, but then there was the time when Hillary Clinton came and that was a thrill.

I think about all of its struggles that I was a part of. Now when I look back as a retired person, it was much more challenging than it would have been if I'd just been occupying an office where things had already been established. I was very lucky to be able to work directly with chancellors and to know something about what was happening at the very heart of the institution.

Q. The purpose of these interviews is to try to tell the story of what is in the Archives that's on paper. And I just wondered, is there anything else? We have the catalogs; we have the course titles; we have the newspapers. But is there anything else. You have shared some of your experiences in the classroom. Is there anything else? Do you remember anything from your student days that would help a future student understand something about the time in which you came here that you haven't had a chance to share?

A. That's a good question. Well, I think what the university really needs and maybe it's being done now, is a history that really traces from day one to where we are today and into the future. I'm not sure anything like that exists because as I said earlier, the character of this institution is so grounded in the time it was established and the geography. It would be

interesting for today's students to know that this university has struggled mightily to continue to exist at times in its life.

What we're going through now with the recession and budgetary problems that are so severe is another example of that. But even before, in the 1980s, this campus was hanging on by a thread because it was trying to be successful in ways that the community didn't agree with and the legislative bodies didn't agree with. They didn't like what they were hearing, and there was much struggle. I think history is always very informative. I don't know that there is any history that is actually written. Of course I think in terms of the written word in a world that is now mostly visual (laughter).

Q. When I was here in the 1980s having just moved to Springfield in the late 1970s, I was impressed by the speakers that came to this campus. Did you ever have an opportunity to hear famous people come when you were a student? Or were you still so busy commuting and doing your coursework?

A. No, I don't remember that. After I came here to work, I was lucky enough to be able to meet some people who came. I remember meeting the author, John Updike, who came and delivered an address on our Sangamon Auditorium stage. Obviously when Hillary Clinton came, I can remember the preparations for her arrival were done very quickly. The advance team from the White House just took over and did everything.

Q. Wow.

A. It was like being carried along on a wave.

Q. What other people do you remember helping to host?

A. Well, Bill Cosby came. These are people I actually got to meet. There have been a lot of famous people who came to Sangamon Auditorium.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Robert Kennedy came a few years ago. Oh, David McCullough, who was here a few years ago in an arrangement that we have with the Presidential Museum, Library and Museum. David Brooks was here a few years ago.

Q. Uh-huh.

A. Yes, we've been able to draw people here that were very high-level, prestigious people. I guess if I were to think about this institution overall, I think it's still struggling. I think it's made enormous strides in terms of the physical campus, in terms of adapting to the times, i.e. online, lower division, younger students. And I think it's still very much grappling with what it wants to be. After 40 years, it's still really, I think it has some better idea, but I think it's still trying to

figure that out. I guess I think of it as a scrappy young adult who is still fighting to know who and what he wants to be when he grows up but knows that he's going to succeed because of everything he's been through.

Q. Are there any other things you would like to have recorded about your recollections that I haven't asked?

A. I can't think of anything at this point. It was a glorious ride, never a dull moment as far as actually being here, from establishing an entrance marker that tried to create more permanence, trying to go from something that looked more temporary and short-lived, to something more permanent and long-lasting. And that happened I think with the colonnade, the installation of the colonnade. Suddenly we had a signature photograph that we could use everywhere and on the web.

Another thing that really changed life on campus, as it did everywhere else, was the web. When we started moving toward communicating through the web and establishing a web site for this university and so forth, then I could really begin to feel change happening. Of course the Internet preceded that, but as always, technology is wonderful and it's a pain. But I come from a place where the written word was the center of everything and so some of the changes that I have seen happen, I don't particularly agree with.

But I do know that social media is a fact of life; they are part of the fabric of our lives now. So you either adjust or you don't, and I think that's the way the campus has been. It's had to adjust to many, many changes and difficulties. Over time, though, I think the media has been very good to this campus. I think they've given, overall, a pretty fair presentation of us as a campus.

At one time early on in my career here, I was very lucky to work with a reporter at the State Journal-Register. His name was Doug Pokorski. He was the higher education reporter. He and I talked every single week about what was happening here. He wrote wonderful stories. He knew higher ed; he valued it. He gave us so many, many stories and space in that newspaper that the university doesn't get anymore because there is no higher ed reporter. That value is gone. So you have to turn elsewhere and look for ways to publicize the university without benefit of reporters and paid advertising.

Q. Right. Well, thank you very much.

A. Well, you're welcome. Thank you, I've enjoyed it.

Q. Ok.

End of Tape 1

Interview continues on Tape 2.

Q. Ready?

A. This is an addition to what I talked about before. I wanted to say something about the public affairs mission or mandate of the university, because that's something that I think is very important. I've always felt that way about the mandate. Oh, I don't think they call it a mandate anymore.

I think I'm going to sound like a PR person here, but I think because of our location here in the state capitol and the opportunities that that provides for our students to interact with state government is important. Using it as a learning tool, as in research, as in job experience, and so forth is essential. Public affairs I think, has been in the last few years downplayed, and I think that's a mistake.

I think we talk about this public liberal arts university and that's important. But I think when a university does something well and is positioned geographically to do it, that should be emphasized. It should be supported. I know there are mixed opinions about that, but it was a mandate that began with this university, and I think that the de-emphasis of that is probably a mistake.

End of Interview

56 minutes 0 seconds