

INTERVIEW WITH KERMIT PHELPS

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Oral History Project
The K.U. Retiree's Club
The University of Kansas

KERMIT PHELPS

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Q: It is Monday, June 13, and this is Mary-Kate Tews, and I'm having a conversation with Dr. Kermit Phelps. Well, Dr. Phelps would you like to give us some background about your family, perhaps your parents, even your grandparents or as far back as stories of your ancestors exist?

A: Well, I think the branch of my family that has probably kept in contact more than any other because we have had family reunions is the Bradshaw side, which is my mother's side of the family. There were seven brothers who settled in Kentmore, Kansas, which was a small town outside of Dodge City. All seven of the brothers remained in Kansas, although they spread out from the original acreage in general. There are some of the descendents who still live there, and at our Bradshaw reunion two years ago one of the oldest ones who was the son of the woman of seven was there at the reunion. My mother's father was one of the seven brothers who became a lawyer, and he died when he was in his '30's. I never did get to see my grandfather, although my grandmother I knew very, very well and she lived until my own children were in high school. These seven Bradshaw brothers scattered all over the country with my mother marrying and settling in Newton, Kansas, which was then by a railroad center. My Dad was a chef on the railroad. Newton was where I was born, but we left there when I was two

years old, and my Dad was transferred to Chillecothe, Illinois, which was just 135 miles south of Chicago.

Q: Now, if he was working as a chef, was he on trains between certain points was that the idea or not?

A: He was working as a chef of the superintendent of certain divisions, so he had a private car. So he did not travel, other than when the superintendent went some place.

Q: Well that must have been quite an honor. How did he come up through the ranks of ... you know being a chef is kind of a high position anyway in the culinary world. Where did he learn cooking like that?

A: I think, for the most part, he learned on his own, and then working as a short order cook in restaurants. Because by the time when I first knew he was a chef, he was the chef. It spilled over into our family life, because when he was not on the road, he used to like to do the cooking.

Q: I was going to ask you about that.

A: Oh yes. His meals were always quite elaborate. Breakfast, you know, was like a feast.

Q: What did he like to serve? What were his specialties?

A: Well, particularly for breakfast, he liked to have cucumbers with meals, and always potatoes. Now he didn't go too much for cereals and the kinds of things that we do at the present time. The kind, as he said, would stick to your ribs. In a sense what I think you do is overeat if you continue to eat like that. We were always glad though as children -- there were three of us. I had an older sister; I was in the middle; and I had a younger sister. The older sister is now dead, and the younger sister lives

in Topeka, Kansas.

Q: Now, your father. Where was his family from?

A: Kentucky originally. They moved and settled in Columbus, Kansas.

Q: Now how far was your dad in relation to where your mother grew up?

A: Oh, quite a way. Columbus, Kansas is here in the southeast corner of Kansas. Jetmore is out here to the west of Dodge City.

Q: Well then how did your parents meet?

A: Well my mother had moved almost to the Hutcheson area, and of course it was through the railroad stopovers, I would say, in the Hutcheson Dodge City area, when her family lived where the crews changed. I think it was in Dodge City where they first met. At that time Dodge City was a railroad stopover. As he moved up in his own career as chef, he got stationed near Chicago. So that my whole early childhood was in Illinois.

Q: Yes it really was in Illinois and not Kansas. And I know that your early education was in Illinois. How did that education prepare you for later? Were there some fairly good schools that you could go to at Chillecothe? What was the situation there?

A: It's interesting when you say "fairly good schools in Chillecothe." Chillecothe was the kind of a town that within twenty minutes you could walk the whole town. There was one school. One grade school, one high school, and let's see there were two other black families in Chillecothe, that's all.

Q: Now how many other families would you say there might have been?

A: I would say the total population of Chillecothe was about 2,000.

Q: So you were quite unusual!

A: Well, it was quite an unusual setting for me in as much as, you

see, in all of my early childhood, friends were made from this size up. There was just an acceptance. Discrimination was just something we didn't know about. We went everywhere -- birthday parties and high school socials ...

Q: And nobody thought a second about it.

A: No.

Q: Now is Chillecothe, or at that time, was Chillecothe ... was the railroad its main source of economics; was that the big deal in Chillecothe?

A: Yes.

Q: So a lot of these families were railroad families as well. All the laborers worked with the railroad.

A: Yes. There was one. Chillecothe was what they called a division point. This where they have what they called the round house, overhaul of all the engine units and so forth. And many people worked there. Of course they always changed crews on the freights that came in. Passenger trains did not change engines. I would say most of the children were in grade school and in high school. There were, of course, farmers who came in. It's rather interesting. Since I became Chairman of the Board of AARP, I have subsequently now touched bases with four of the people I was in high school with that I hadn't heard from in over fifty years.

Q: That's wonderful! Now, did you recognize each other, or was it that you recognized the name rather than perhaps ...

A: They recognized the name, yes. Then they wrote and wanted to know was it the Kermit Phelps that was in high school with them. One with whom I've corresponded lives in Washington, and since I was in Washington two or three times a month, my wife and I got to meet her and her husband. We

became very good friends.

Q: So there was one elementary school and one high school. My guess would be that it probably was not a very usual thing for the young people in a high school to go on to a college or university. They ... please correct me if I'm wrong ... my sense is that, perhaps, they went into professions or training schools or stuff like that rather than college. Am I correct or what would you say to that?

A: Or they went into the businesses of their families. Most of the businesses there were family businesses. As I said, some came in from the rural sections and so they just continued on with that. I remember one student in our class, the daughter of the town banker, and she was one of those students who was called "the brain." She went on to college and took up social work, but came back and lived in the area there. Most of them went to work through an apprenticeship with their fathers or businesses.

Q: Did you have a feeling all along when you were in high school that there was something in particular that you wanted to do with your life in the future? Or were you thinking in those terms?

A: Well let's say only vaguely. My mother was part of the driving force, because my Dad was not too much for college. Her aspiration for me was for me to be a doctor.

Q: Ah, a medical doctor?

A: Yes. She had that in mind. Although when I got into high school, I was always batting the ball back and forth, even before I had a net or anything else. I was pretty good in tennis. Finally I was on the basketball team. The reason I was on the basketball team was one of the strangest reasons you'd ever think of. When I was a sophomore in high

school, I ran track just a little. When I was a freshman in high school, I graduated from the eighth grade, and at that time I wore an eight-year old boy's suit.

Q: An eight year old ... you were still that small?

A: Yes, very.

Q: Were your hands and feet large, but the rest of you small? I had a brother who when he was in seventh or eighth grade, all of a sudden we realized his feet were growing and his hands were growing, but the rest of him hadn't really gotten started yet. Were you one of those?

A: No. I was just small.

Q: You were just small. All right...

A: At the end of my freshman year, I was beginning as a sophomore I guess, I don't know why, but I developed ulcers in my eyes. Consequently, I was out of school for, I would say, one half of that year. I was treated by a specialist, and I couldn't see very much of anything at all. Then finally I got so I could see. I would go to school, and my classmates would read to me, and so this was the way that I got through the sophomore year. But since I couldn't do very much at school, study periods and this kind of thing -- you know I was at home a good deal of the time. Consequently, everybody else was at school, and I had nothing else to do. So what I did was I drew a circle on the barn wall, and I had a little ball about like this. I used to try and hit that circle with the ball. I got so I was really good at it!

Q: Like target practice.

A: When I got back into high school, right after that I got my growth spurt. I really went up, and so I went out for basketball, and my goodness,

I could hit long shots from any angle! It was that practice that did it. I made the team the first time I went out.

Q: What position did you play?

A: Guard. We went to the state tournament once.

Q: Wow. Chillecothe?

A: Yes. It put us on the map. I won two letters in basketball and one in tennis.

Q: Very good. Did they ever figure out what it was that had happened to your eyes?

A: Apparently in terms of communicating it to us, no. Although our own family doctor indicated that the problem might have been that I was getting some kind of a reaction from my teeth.

Q: Oh for heaven sakes.

A: And with the removal of them, I could certainly continue to improve. What I had to do was wear dark glasses and then a set of half glasses. Then they put regular glasses on me, and I had to have them changed every year, as a matter of fact until I was in college.

Q: And then all of a sudden things normalized, or ...

A: Yes, because I didn't wear glasses for quite a while.

Q: Did you find that wearing glasses interfered at all with basketball? Did you wear them during the games?

A: Yes I did.

Q: You tied your glasses on. Your parents, then, had different points of view about what you ought to be doing. Did your father think that you ought to go to work for the railroad? Was he pushing any kind of particular work?

A: No he didn't. Although because the Santa Fe was planning to go out there, they had a large restaurant there. Those were the days when the upper crust went and ate in the diner and the cost was astronomical even then. So they would stop at certain restaurants. So this was the kind of thing he thought perhaps that I could work at, still associated with the food business. And I did. I did during the summers. I worked the counter in the restaurant in Chillecothe.

Q: Now what about your two sisters? What kind of hopes or plans did your parents have for them? Was it mainly that they should get married and have a family, or was there any thought about a professional career for them?

A: At that time there was little or no mention made of career or professions, because girls went to high school, got a high school education and then became housewives.

Q: Did they follow that pattern?

A: Well my older sister, she was the shorty of the group. She was a very jolly kind of a person. She did not; I suppose you might call her the maverick of the family, because she had ideas about Christianity and so forth. We all went to Sunday school; we always walked because church from our house was quite a way away, but we always went to Sunday school. She decided before she had gotten out of high school to become a Catholic. So she did. She was the Catholic of the family, as matter of fact.

Q: Do you have any idea what inspired her to do that?

A: I really do not, primarily because we used to all go to Sunday school together ...

Q: And what church was that?

A: Baptist. My mother was Baptist.

Q: The Baptists usually don't care too much for Catholics, if I remember.

A: No they don't; they still don't! But you see when we got to high school, because we had different friends and so forth, going to church was different. Then I joined the Boy Scouts. My scout leader was Methodist, so I then went to the Methodist Church.

Q: So that was the beginning of your personal ecumenical move.

A: My Dad was a Methodist.

Q: Oh he was. And your mother was Baptist?

A: Yes.

Q: And you had a sister who was Catholic? Wow. Now how much older than you was your sister?

A: Two years.

Q: And what was her name?

A: Dorothy. I am two years older than my younger sister.

Q: And her name?

A: Clementine. She lives in Topeka.

Q: Now, did Dorothy find a husband then and get married in the Catholic church or did she want to become a nun? I had thought when I was growing up that the most exciting thing, since I couldn't be a priest, I was really interested in being a priest when I was younger. I thought it would be wonderful to be a missionary of some kind. Did she?

A: Apparently, no. She did not seem to aspire to that, because after I graduated from high school, my Dad moved to St. Louis. He went into the same kind of job with the Frisco Railroad. It was from St. Louis that I

came to the University of Kansas; that's where we were living then. I think we lived there for about a year and then he was transferred to Springfield, Missouri, which was also a division point for the Frisco Railroad, but he was still doing the same kind of job for a superintendent on a private car.

Q: Now that's still quite a distance from the University of Kansas.

A: Oh yes.

Q: From here to St. Louis is 250 miles, and you add another fifty; that's 300, because you are heading towards the center of the state as you head to Springfield. So why would you choose a Kansas University over perhaps one in Illinois or something around the St. Louis area which seems to be just very ranked with colleges and universities?

A: Well I had a choice. The University of Illinois was looking for athletic prospects.

Q: So this was about what year? What year did you graduate high school?

A: 1926. Peoria, Illinois was only 18 miles away. So these were the choices that I had. All through my growing up years, my mother's mother lived in Kansas. In the summer we would go to Larnard, Kinsley, but it was always western Kansas. Kansas became pretty well known to us. I also had an aunt who lived in Kansas who was pretty close to us, to me particularly. She had moved to Topeka, and so coming to Lawrence I could be close to her, and this was one of the reasons, I suppose, that I began thinking of Kansas. She also knew some people in Lawrence and that was the overture that got me around and so forth.

Q: I know from doing some research work on Phog Allen and Jim Naismith that students really had to stay in private homes, boarding houses,

etc. The university really didn't do very much to build dormitories or anything did they for a long time?

A: And if they had, I wouldn't have been able to go in.

Q: So you were facing something that you really hadn't faced before.

A: That's right.

Q: Do you ... is there some incident in your life that you recall that perhaps the first time you realized you were being discriminated against, or made you realize that you were black and they were white, or whatever they were?

A: I suppose the most telling thing would be when I got to Lawrence, Mr. Stone, this friend of mine, met me. Since he was a fraternity man, he took me right to the Kappa Alpha Psi fraternity house, where I was accepted with open arms. Then this was something pretty new to me, however. But they were very, very nice to me. But the first time that I went up on the Hill to register, who should I run into but a girl from Chillecothe who had subsequently moved to Kansas. Of course we were glad to see one another and we were going to go to lunch. Lunch where in Lawrence?

Q: Yes. Nowhere.

A: That's right! This really began to bother me. There was nowhere on the Hill that you could eat. They had a little cafeteria that was sitting right out in front of the library at that time. It wouldn't accommodate too many people; apparently it was not there for the black students. Subsequently they put a place over in a corner. But that's when I think we first began to learn that there was a difference there.

Q: Now you'd lettered in basketball in high school; you'd been part of a championship team that went to the Illinois State Basketball

Championship; did you want to play basketball at Kansas. Had you ever?

A: It wasn't that important.

Q: It wasn't that important.

A: No, not to me. My first year at KU, I was more concerned with getting good grades. I would study, study, study. Since I had to find some kind of subsistence; that was one good deed I think was when Mr. Stone introduced me to the fraternity. Because the fraternity fellows got me a job waiting tables in the fraternity house. This then gave me three meals a day and also it paid me \$2.00 a week.

Q: Two dollars a week!

A: Good spending money.

Q: And where did you live? Did you live at the Kappa Alpha Psi house?

A: Yes.

Q: And all the time you were at KU? Or most of the time?

A: For all of my undergraduate years, yes.

Q: I was looking at year books, and I was noticing that, of course this was even earlier. I was trying to find out what student activities there were when Naismith first came to KU in '96 or '98, so I was kind of looking at that time period up through about 1920. Although there are pictures of various young men and women, there are no listing of activities for blacks. Were blacks just not welcome to participate in the choruses and the bands and the orchestras at that time? If you had wanted to play an instrument; if you had wanted to go out for basketball, or wanted to be part of the debating society, would that have happened?

A: I should say not.

Q: Now was it something that was said to you outright, or was it something that was just understood? How was that expressed?

A: It was pretty much rather plainly and rather directly conveyed to you by your fraternity brothers. So it spared me from getting into a situation like that.

Q: So to keep everything peaceful, this is how they handled this.

A: It's rather interesting to note that I went to work as a waiter at the Sigma Chi house. All my undergrad years I worked at Sigma Chi, so I knew many, many of those individuals who came through 1926 on. It is interesting. I belonged to Rotary Club 13 here, which is the largest rotary club -- 650 members or something like that. Many of the fellows in there are the former Sigma Chi people. And it's been very interesting how they have followed my career. One of them, Jack Dressler called me up one time when he had seen something in the paper. Some of those, Robert Price, who was the Supreme Court Justice in Kansas, and Dr. Eckles, they were all of that era, they still write me. So I keep in touch with them.

Q: So in a way, you were establishing your own network of people ...

A: Without knowing it.

Q: Yes. And what was your relationship to those young men that you were waiting on tables for? Did friendships develop?

A: Oh yes, very much so. I was very, very good in chemistry, primarily because I studied all the time. Many times, even though there was not quite a social association, we could meet in the library and study together. This happened very, very frequently. But I have to say that was one of the positive things about the fraternity. Usually whatever you were taking, there was some upper classman who had had that course and was

willing to help you. They gave you not only encouragement, but actual help with studies.

Q: So friendships were made anyway. People came to respect and honor each other and fortunately you've all lived long enough to really overcome a whole lot of barriers that have been put in your way.

A: Yes. Dr. Eckles went on to complete his medical training and so forth. He was a pediatrician. He was our children's doctor.

Q: Well, you were very good in chemistry. I don't believe you graduated with a science major though, as an undergraduate, did you? Weren't you an English major? How did you happen to major in English if you were so good in the sciences?

A: We had to take English anyway. As time went on, when I got ready to declare my major, things were getting kind of tight. I had to revamp some of the kinds of goals that I had set.

Q: Now you mean financially things were getting tight? What was happening then?

A: Well you can remember.

Q: '29 was the crash.

A: I entered KU in '27. So in two years not only was there the crash, but there were other things taking place, you know, that were cramping the style of everyone. My family was unable to give me any kind of support. In '29 this is what happened, because I ran out of money entirely. So I went, I don't even remember how I got hooked up with the Union Pacific, but I did.

Q: So the railroad comes into play again.

A: Again, yes. I heard about it and went up to Omaha to try and get

a job there. I think I borrowed money to get up there, because I didn't have one penny. The job was ... the hiring actually took place in Portland, Oregon. But if you were looked upon favorably, they sent you out to Portland. So I got favorably looked upon there, and they gave me a pass to go. I had nothing to eat on, and of course it's two nights and three days out there to Portland, Oregon. But I was pretty honest. I told the guys in the diner that I was coming out there to go to work on the diner. So they fed me!

Q: Bless their hearts.

A: I got out there and I didn't know anybody, but they took me to places where they stayed, and I was able to get an advance and I was able to make some money, so I was on the road from Seattle to Chicago every summer for four years.

Q: From 1929 to about 1933?

A: Yes.

Q: That's the train I took in 1940.

A: That was one of their crack trains.

Q: I loved it; I was a little girl then. I was probably five or six then. When you were in Omaha, you weren't there very long were you? You don't remember anybody by the name of Lorenz do you? My grandfather worked with the Union Pacific Railroad in Omaha, Nebraska. My father was born there in 1906. One of the jobs that my grandfather had was in the lumber industry. Union Pacific was already buying up acres and acres and acres, and he worked to estimate how much timber was in certain acreages and things like that. My grandmother could go anywhere; she always had a pass. I imagine that our families, somehow, may have come across one another in

Omaha or Seattle or somewhere. Now, how long did you work for the Union Pacific then? Did you have to put your education on the back burner for a period of time? Did you earn enough money and go back, or did you just do this over a summer? How did this work out?

A: I put my education on the back burner for one year. Just one year.

Q: And you were able to earn enough to go back to school?

A: At that time, times were hard. Tuition per semester at KU was \$30. I could go out in the summer on the Union Pacific and on that run from Chicago to Seattle, I got a flat salary, but I could make enough tips to use to support me during the summer months -- pay my room rent, and because I worked on the diner I didn't have any food bill, but it would carry me over during the time on my layover. I could buy my clothes, pay my tuition and with the salary I got, I could save!

Q: You learned to become a very thrifty person.

A: Oh yes, yes.

Q: So you went back to school, and you had all these English credits, so it was probably a good idea to ...

A: You see I could, with the money I had made, pay my tuition, and as long as I didn't have high lab fees ...

Q: That's right the lab fees in the chemistry lab, you paid for all your chemicals and glassware. Anything you broke you owned, I'm sure.

A: That's right, and in English you didn't have that.

Q: But did you check out books? Were they loaned? How did that work out?

A: You always would contact an individual who just took the course

and got used books.

Q: So you had your English.

A: Financially, it was the best way to go. I could complete in English, go out and teach a while and get money to get back into what I wanted to get back into.

Q: So by that time you had a better idea of what you wanted for a career?

A: Well, I had a fairly good idea.

Q: What were you thinking of?

A: I was still thinking of a medical profession.

Q: Oh, medical school.

A: Yes that's what I was still thinking.

Q: And were you thinking about KU's medical school? Or were you thinking of somebody else's.

A: Yes. Even though I knew there wasn't much of anybody else's medical school you could think of, KU was just beginning to let the bars down, although they were making it pretty hard. Missouri didn't even let you go to Columbia.

Q: I find it interesting when reading about Missouri and about Kansas and the border wars, because one was a slave state and one was a free state and the distinction is interesting. They are very proud in Kansas of being a free state.

A: But, there's a difference you know between overt and covert discrimination. Sometimes it's better to face the overt than is the covert. Because Kansas came in as a free state, and education -- there was no discrimination in Kansas anywhere. But, you see, as Kansas began to develop

teachers' colleges and many blacks went to the teachers colleges -- Emporia, Hayes, Winfield -- but when they came out, even though it is a free state, they didn't hire a black teacher! So you had to go south somewhere to teach. As it increased, and more and more were coming out, they began to put pressure on hiring black teachers. So by their own admission and request Coffeerville, Kansas City, Kansas, Topeka ...

Q: We were talking about the four or five major cities in Kansas that decided to have segregated schools, and this was what year, Dr. Phelps? Was it in the '30's or earlier?

A: Well, I would say it was in the '30's. I couldn't say exactly, but it was around that time.

Q: And those particular cities had a large enough population that they could do it in sort of an economical way. They could set aside a school for minority children.

A: Well both Wichita and Topeka, their elementary schools, they had five or six elementary schools which were all black.

Q: That's quite a few.

A: Oh yes.

Q: So then there became places for the black teachers that the normal colleges were turning out... there were jobs then for those teachers. So those teachers really weren't being hired in those schools where the white children were going to school. So it was really very divided.

A: Yes, and in those cities only. In other schools, Kansas was different from probably most any other state, because there were parts in Western Kansas where Catholics had settled, and it was practically a Catholic community, and their parochial school was the public school.

Q: Oh, there wasn't any other school?

A: There was no other. The children were taught by sisters.

Q: And so that was an integrated school?

A: Oh very much. Well all the rest of them were integrated. When we went out to visit my grandmother one year, we stayed until after school started. I entered the first grade out there. They were all integrated everywhere else except in those particular places.

Q: Now you said your older sister Dorothy had become Catholic, and I'm thinking about this now, maybe it's not in the correct chronological order. When did you become Catholic?

A: After I got married.

Q: After you got married. Okay, so I'm getting ahead of the story.

A: My older sister, when my family moved to Springfield, that's when she got married. She married in Springfield. She didn't have any children, but she developed diabetes. She used to be kind of round and roly polly, and she got to be like this...

Q: Very slender ...

A: Oh yes. And in her later years, she had diabetes, and then things didn't go too well in their marriage, and her husband divorced her. She left and went to live with my aunt in Topeka. She died about two or three years after that. That's where she died. But we used to go to the Catholic church with her a lot. She was always very, very concerned about us. When I got married, my wife, her family was all very staunch Baptist. I was Methodist. Although during my years in school, I used to teach ten, eleven, and twelve year olds at Sunday school and BYPU on Sunday evening in Lawrence. The Blue laws were in effect then, and the only thing open on

Sunday was the church.

Q: So that then became your social life.

A: For sure.

Q: So you were very active... well that's what I was wondering. When we were talking about education and the places to teach, you graduated from KU with your English degree and then where did you end up teaching?

A: Topeka.

Q: In one of the black schools, one of the segregated schools.

A: Yes. Well it was a Kansas vocational school.

Q: What was that place like?

A: That was the answer to ... you see even though they had the black elementary schools, the high school was not segregated. Topeka had only one high school, this huge high school. It was segregated in one sense -- that you could go there, but you couldn't take part in any social activities or any athletics or things like that.

Q: Which is such an important thing for a high school aged person.

A: Yes. But this Kansas vocational school was all black for those who didn't like mixing after having gone to grade school. It was set up by the state, and many kids who went there -- they were from all over Kansas, not just Topeka -- it was for teaching vocational training -- the manual arts and this kind of thing.

Q: It also gave you a high school education? Did it go high school and beyond? Could you stay there after age sixteen, seventeen or eighteen? Was there any kind of requirement for how long you had to stay in school in Kansas?

A: There was, yes. At the particular time when I was teaching there

in the '30's, there was an evening division at which individuals could come and they got KU credit. It was like an extension program.

Q: Ah, yes. Not exactly a junior college, but more like extension courses from KU. So they would earn credit, and were you teaching in the evening division, or were you teaching both in the day time and in the evening.

A: Both, I was teaching in both.

Q: You had a long day ... a lot of preparations.

A: Well it was good experiences.

Q: Were you finding that you had to offer remedial classes then for the youngsters who were coming away from the other high school experience or were these just regular everyday kids in other respects?

A: These were everyday kids. I mean they weren't problem kids.

Q: Oh, so you didn't have to worry about that kind of thing. And then in the evening you were working with adults who had ambitions for a better life, a better education. How did you enjoy that experience? How did you feel about it?

A: Very good. As a matter of fact I continued with it even after I came here. I taught the evening division classes at KU, and for UMKC and for Avila and Rockherst, after I came here and I was working over at the hospital.

Q: How did you have time for that?

A: I wonder how I had time to do all that. Well the evening classes either met once or twice a week, that's all. So I came here in '52, transferred from the Topeka VA Hospital; this hospital was built in '52. However I was with the mental hygiene clinic which was at 1828 Walnut until

'57.

Q: Well that's quite a stretch from teaching evening division classes in English and Psychology to working at the VA Hospital ...

A: Stretch comes in that. With the expertise that I gained in working on the Portland Rose, I can mix almost any drink there was.

Q: Oh, so you became a bartender as well as ...

A: Well you see the Observation Car on the Portland Rose, I mean they had a bar, and it was opened until twelve o'clock, so I got to be pretty good at that. Well, when I was teaching ...

Q: Wasn't Kansas a dry state?

A: Oh yes. It was very dry.

Q: So you were a rare commodity if you were a good, experienced mixologist.

A: Yes, when I got married I was also working part time as head waiter for the Topeka Country Club. And here I got to know the blue blood of Topeka, and I got pretty well acquainted with Dr. Karl Menninger.

Q: Oh that's how you met him.

A: Oh yes. My wife's a caterer and we used to serve parties at his home and so forth and so when they opened up the VA program for training psychologists, he asked me why didn't I apply?

Q: Had you at all talked to him about the fact that you at one time wanted to study medicine? Did he know that already about you?

A: I don't think so. I don't think so, because you see in those last years when I declared English as my major I also took everything they had in psychology and I did the testing for the Douglas County elementary school system. So I was testing kids long before I ever got my AB degree.

Q: What were the kinds of tests that they were giving at that point?

A: Stanford-Benet. Oh yes.

Q: I did very well on those tests.

A: I ran the Stanford-Benet tests, and then they had a performance test, because some individuals, you know, have difficulty with speaking or with fluency in the English language and so we could give this test. We could approximate IQ with this test, which did not require any verbalization.

Q: It didn't?

A: Oh no. Well we give tests now where you know you don't have to say anything. All you have to do is point. It's a projective test.

Q: It's been so long since I've done any of those tests. So, there you were; it was in the early part of your marriage. Had your wife been in the catering business before? Was this a family catering business? How did that come about?

A: Her mother was an excellent cook. Her aunt had a following like I don't know what, and she used to work with her.

Q: So you've stayed close to food.

A: Yes. Except for me!

Q: You've managed to stay very thin.

A: Yes.

Q: So you stay out of the kitchen; you just enjoy the fruits of what they put together.

A: Well, eating is my lowest priority.

Q: So the food business and having been the head waiter at the Topeka Country Club really put you in a wonderful position to meet people. Tell me

something about Carl Menninger. What kind of a man was he? About how old was he at this time? What do you recall about him in particular?

A: I would say that, because this would be the 1940's, he was pretty much in his prime. He had written a book Man Against Himself. The Menninger Clinic was beginning to get pretty widespread recognition. It was at this time that the mental health program in Kansas was in such a horrible state. They asked the Menninger Foundation to see what they could do to set it right. In about three years Kansas was ranked about fifth in the nation. They revamped the whole state hospital and so forth. They really put it on the map. At that time, 1946, the Veteran's Administration started subsidizing graduate study in clinical psychology. It was that '46 program that started out at the Topeka General V.A. Hospital.

Q: Named for a special politician?

A: No. And so they asked Dr. Carl to come over and head the unit. He was the administrator, and what he said went! He was quite terse but he really had a soft side. You wouldn't know it if you had to deal with him in a business way.

Q: He had a professional and a business side that was very much divided from his personal side. You had been serving dinners at his home and so forth. You saw that other side of him, so you were very fortunate to know both sides.

A: His brother, Will, was the front man for Dr. Menninger. He did the marketing. Carl was the scientific, research end.

Q: So when he suggested to you that you might like to get one of these graduate scholarships or fellowships and study this, in a way you were already prepared to do that, because you had taken all of those psychology

courses. What was it about psychology that you liked so well?

A: I guess it was people, because even on the diner, even on the observation car ... I mean people are interesting. It is interesting to just try and understand.

Q: Don't they say that bartenders make great psychiatrists, at least amateur psychiatrists. So you were getting some interesting training and you didn't even realize it! This particular graduate program, the first one that you went in to, was it a one-year or a two-year program? How was it at the VA Hospital?

A: It was for a Ph.D. It was till you finished.

Q: So it was a four-year course. So you began at Topeka, that was the new place for you to be; you're new family was established there.

A: Yes. It was KU oriented. The undergraduate program was at KU, because your degree actually came from KU. The clinical experience you got in Topeka.

Q: Where were the courses held, actually at the hospital?

A: Both.

Q: The hospital became an education center, or KU ...

A: Lawrence.

Q: So you went back to Lawrence for classes. Well fortunately those two cities are not that far apart. As bad as the Kansas highways are today, you could still make it in an hour or so. As you were studying did you feel that you made the right decision; did you know as you went along that you were meant for psychology?

A: It didn't take very long for me to at least gain confidence in myself, and apparently other people had the same feeling because of our

class; I think there were seventeen in our group; when we were given our assignments at the hospital, my first assignment was in the maximum security ward.

Q: Oh my. That must have been an exciting place to be. You were put in the unit where there were hard-core, unsolvable psychiatric cases there. Who were most of these people? Now this was a VA hospital. Were these people, were they shell ... I was seven or eight years old coming out of World War II. Were these World War II heavy cases, or what did you find?

A: As strange as it may seem they went back clear to the Spanish/American War.

Q: Oh of course they would.

A: Because at that time they were still around. And you had World War I's. These were the ones that were probably up in years and were having some kind of senile problems. So, the World War II inmates were perhaps the most active.

Q: And they were the most fresh.

A: Yes, that's right. And at that time they were doing a considerable amount of lobotomies. It was quite popular then.

Q: How about electric shock treatment? Was that being developed at that time?

A: It was already developed, yes. They were still using insulin shock also. This was very difficult, because unless you were monitored pretty carefully because as you start to come out of it you can also die.

Q: Was the electric shock treatment, isn't a convulsion that they are attempting to make happen, because they feel that the convulsion actually turns the person around? I know I am being very amateur in my description,

but I am drudging this up from ...

A: It erases all of the things that were bothering you that were causing you to be combative and aggressive and so forth. It wipes the slate straight clean.

Q: But it doesn't last. It has something to do with the long and short term memory?

A: What happens is that it may very well erase it and so you don't have that problem immediately, but as it begins to come back, then you have to come back for a refill. You have many people.... when I first came they made a fortune out of that.

Q: I hurt when you say that to me.

A: Electric shock is still used in some particular cases...

Q: I must have heard something on public radio recently about that; that's why it's kind of fresh in memory.

A: In depression cases ...

Q: Yes. How long a period would go on, on the average, between electric shock treatments? If someone were to come in who really needed it and it was prescribed for that person, would it be a year, two years, three years before they had to come back?

A: If they were coming on an out patient basis? There's a difference, you see. Using electric shock in the hospital, it may be decided to recommend electric shock for them. It may be series of fifteen shocks.

Q: Over a period of days?

A: Yes. Now if you were coming on an out patient basis, you see what you usually do is you get your electric shock, and it may be two weeks and

you'd be back for another one after that, or you may come a month later. It depends on where you are and what kind of state of depression you are in. We had a place downtown where you could just drop in and get it.

Q: Get your electric shock fix!

A: That's right.

Q: I will want to make an appointment to see you to talk about this particular subject, because my father had psychological difficulties and electric shock treatments in a state hospital were prescribed as part of his treatment. A lot of things I'd like to understand about what he was going through as an out patient, just so you and I could talk and I could give you my remembrances of growing up and being in this situation.

A: Subsequent to the use of electric shock they found that they had certain drugs that would do the same thing.

Q: That's right. Lithium came in too late for my father. He was gone by then, which was a real shame. He was on some sort of drug medication before he died, but I don't know what it was, and I don't think my mother would remember it now.

A: The first thing that came out was Serpasine, that was a trade name. It was actually an old Indian remedy from a snakeroot, which they found over in India which people chewed and it gave such a calming effect and so what they did was analyzed it and then they began to make it synthetically. It's kind of mild, really and has a build up property to it. Subsequently having found that, then they developed Thorazine, which, of course, is much, much stronger and used much more frequently. Initially it was used only in an inpatient basis, because you have to monitor it.

Q: I wonder if he might have gotten Thorazine.

A: It would destroy the white corpuscles, so you were susceptible to anything. It is the side effects of Thorazine that are treacherous.

Q: In your study, were you expected to learn to give electric shock treatments? Or were the medical doctors doing that kind of thing as well as the lobotomies and so forth.

A: No.

Q: Who was qualified to do that sort of thing?

A: Usually, in the VA, it was a neurologist who did the electric shock, I mean the lobotomies. Psychiatrists actually did the electric shock treatments. For a while they tried out CO2. Not for very long, but there was some experimentation.

Q: What was your training then? You would be the person who was specially trained to interview the person, to bring things out, to analyze their reactions to things and then subsequently help them plan the treatment for their recovery? Is that the kind of things that you were doing?

A: That's part of it. If you worked in a team, a psychiatric social worker/clinical psychologist/ and the psychiatrist, which is what most out patient clinics are like, it is the clinical psychologist who makes the assessment of what kind of personality this individual is. You see where the strengths and where the weaknesses are. Neither of the other two have any kind of training in this area at all. It's the difference. Both the clinical psychologist and the psychiatrist are going to spend nine years, including your internship, but your psychiatrist, after his MD degree, spends the next three years of residency in the hospital, treating individuals who are a little bit on the far side, while the clinical psychologist studies personality whatever it is, normal and abnormal. It is

his task then to tell how much this individual deviates.

Q: Yes, where on this continuum do they fall.

A: Yes.

Q: Well then you have been all of your life an observer of people, working well with people, put into situations where it was very difficult because of certain barriers that were up, but because of that person you were and the way you could relate to other people, lots of those barriers disappeared, and a lot of respect was generated.

A: Sometimes it's almost uncanny. When I first came to Kansas City, there weren't but three psychiatrists in Kansas City. One of them was Sylvia Allen. Now Sylvia Allen was one of the consultants to our mental hygiene clinic where I was sent from Topeka. In Topeka, I did my internship at the Menninger Foundation, and the fellow who taught psychotherapy was Dr. Eckstein who was really a pretty hard taskmaster. When I first came here, Dr. Allen told me, "You know you've got a direct line to your unconscious because you seem to follow it, and it works even though you don't know what you're doing!"

Q: Yes, you believe in your gut reactions. Your intuition.

A: Follow that and you will not go wrong.

Q: How wonderful that she would say that to you, that she would share that with you.

A: Well, she was a real consultant. Let me tell you. I really did learn much from her. I was rather grateful. Subsequently I used to do psychological testing for her people who were in analysis.

Q: What would you like to do, because I was thinking that we should have one or more other sessions, but this has happened with other people

I've interviewed, so we don't have to rush anything and we have the time to do it.

A: This is a nice breaking point.

Q: Well, we will pause here on June 13 and pick up next time.

Q: Were these orderlies or attendants? Were there very many of those?

A: Yes, quite a number but they were untrained. It was only subsequent to that that it became apparent that Kansas was quite far down the list as far as mental health programs were concerned. And so they asked the assistance of the Menninger Foundation to sort of bolster it up and get it set on the right foot. It was subsequent to that in about three or four years that Kansas come up to number five.

Q: So that was fantastic.

A: It was a real turnaround.

Q: Now was this in the late '30's or early 40's? When did this happen?

A: It was in the mid '40's. Because it was about '49 or '50 when it began to really show some progress. I did testing there, not on a regular basis, but made rounds with the doctors, which they usually did about once every six weeks, but making rounds was just a walk through to let the patients see you. They were all instructed not to say anything to you.

Q: And this was three doctors, once every six weeks, for 1800 patients. Men and women?

A: Yes, men and women. Well of course, it was that way at state hospitals, in most places were run just about like that. There's been a real about face as far as that's concerned in mental hospitals, at least in

the state of Kansas.

Q: From what you have observed, have we gone too far in the other direction? Are we releasing people, perhaps, who aren't quite ready. Because I know with the problems today with the many, many homeless people, they seem to be discovering that a number - not a huge number - but a number of them are disturbed people and perhaps have been released on their own from an institution to go out and try and make it on their own.

A: Well, you may be right in assuming that they do not keep them nearly for the extent they did before, but there are very good reasons why they did before. Well, for example, Topeka State Hospital had their own dairy farm; they did their own farming; they harvested their own crops and so forth and consequently if an individual got to be any good at any of these why he became a permanent fixture, regardless of what the status of his mental health was.

Q: Was he paid to do that or was that considered his contribution for being in a state institution.

A: His contribution. There wasn't any pay.

Q: I just thought I'd ask! So they were running a farm. So people really could have work to do where they could see that they accomplished something.

A: Oh yes, sure. As a matter of fact it became a way life for them rather than a place where they were rehabilitated and then got back into society. So it was only subsequent to that that in mental hospitals all over the US, I guess, that they began to settle halfway houses, but that was in the late '50's and '60's.

Q: As you began to have more and more exposure to the mentally ill

and you could see what sounds like desperate needs there were in this profession, was your own calling becoming stronger and stronger -- I mean did you really feel that this was where you'd like to spend the majority of the rest of your life as a profession?

A: At that particular time that was the direction that I thought I was going to go. Although it was very interesting to me and I was drawn in that direction, but there were a number of things that were coming along at that time.

Q: Like what?

A: Well, during the war I worked at the 832nd supply depot for the airforce, and during break times there, why a group of us used to get together and sing.

Q: Oh, your musical ability was coming out.

A: What very little that I did have! But at least I kept the group together. I even booked entertainments for them to sing at and so forth.

Q: You served as their manager.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: I see. Well now were you doing this as a civilian working for the airforce, or were you in the airforce?

A: I did it as a civilian working in the airforce.

Q: Now your main job wasn't though to manage the talent and the entertainment, was it?

A: No. I was in charge of the warehouse where all the steel products direct from the steel mill) came in for replacements for the aircraft. And this was just something for myself that was secondary. We called ourselves the "Five Pennies." I guess for about three years we sang together quite a

bit. I guess I learned as much about all of the various things that went on the airplanes for replacements there, because I suppose my own background in chemistry was in my favor at that particular time at least when I was at the Depot, since all steel had to be identified and color coded.

Q: How did you happen to take that job or even be interested in it?

A: Well, one of the managers at the printing company that I worked for serving drinks was entertaining one time and he had a number of the personnel were there, and they got to questioning me about what I would like to do. One of them said "Why don't you come out and talk with me." So I went out to talk with him and wound up working for him.

Q: So you were managing "The Five Pennies" and you were managing the metal parts division of the aircraft for the airforce, and was there anything else? You seem to have a great variety of jobs.

A: Well, there were a few talks I was giving on mental health, which, as I look back now on those talks, I had researched them pretty well, they sound pretty scholarly, but they certainly were not what I would think were the kind of language that gets across to people.

Q: You've learned a great deal then about public speaking.

A: Yes. Well, I guess I was still interested in people, because there were all kinds of problems that came up from time to time and I was constantly interceding in somebody's behalf.

Q: So you really were counseling.

A: Yes that's right.

Q: You were really getting some preliminary work in your clinical counseling. Well then shortly after the war was over, the Veteran's Administration offered this fellowship. Dr. Menninger strongly encouraged

you to do this. The training you took was in Topeka, mainly, and ...

A: Let's say the clinical part of it was in Topeka; the academic was in Lawrence, you see because they were associated with the university.

Q: Did you find that your experience at the university was much different than your original experience, I mean as an undergraduate working on your bachelors degree, as far as the attitudes of teachers toward you, or just the atmosphere on the campus towards black students, whether they were undergraduate or graduate students.

A: Well, it had changed considerably since my undergraduate days.

Q: What were some of the main ways that it had changed?

A: I suppose because the professional personnel on the university had changed considerably, and it had expanded so rapidly and that the differences that had been sort of ironed out in the armed forces made the camaraderie of all different races now quite cosmopolitan. It was a really different kind of atmosphere. Of course, the university had practically outgrown its own boundaries. We had classrooms, sometimes in halls, and we had Saturday classes, which was unheard of before that time.

Q: Because they just couldn't accommodate the number of students who wanted to come to school.

A: So you found Orientals, Blacks, Filipinos ... just a hodge podge.

Q: In Louisiana we call that a gumbo.

A: I suppose there were also other opportunities, much more opportunities, because it was at this time that I chose to serve as an assistant professor.

Q: So as you were working on your doctorate ..

A: Yes.

Q: Were you the only black in the department who was on the staff?
Were there many black students?

A: Quite a number.

Q: More than when you were an undergraduate.

A: Oh yes.

Q: But it was still unusual to see a black as a staff member.

A: Not only unusual, it was unheard of.

Q: So you were unique.

A: Yes, I was a first. But it wasn't for any reason. I got along really well until I got to the chancellor's office and the dean said "No, no that will never do."

Q: What did he give as his reasons or did he have to give any reasons?

A: He didn't have to. That's just something that never had been before.

Q: Now who was the person in the department who recommended you for the position; who was that?

A: Dr. Roger Barker.

Q: Dr. Roger Barker.

A: From California. This was the difference; we now had a new psychology department staff. There were only two individuals there who had been members of the psychology staff before.

Q: So the old guard was down to two. And who was the chancellor at this time, this would be the late '40's or early '50's?

A: I don't remember.

Q: Let me see if I can figure it out ... Malott, that's right.

A: He was the one who said I could not be appointed.

Q: It wasn't like Lindley ...

A: Yes, because he was there when I was there before.

Q: So he was another old guard and was there a while.

A: He would walk down campus and never speak to anybody.

Q: Hmm...

A: I suppose it was his way to be aloof.

Q: That doesn't sound like a good atmosphere for anyone. So did Chancellor Malott straighten things out then or how did Dr. Barker get his way, because obviously you became one of the assistant professors.

A: Dr. Barker said he wouldn't take no for an answer and that he was managing the department or that he would take his staff and take off. In talking with him and some of his staff later on, he would say he was on pins and needles because he didn't know whether they would call that bluff or not! Because it was not long before that school was to open.

Q: And here you have in the state of Kansas, the prestigious national/international Menninger Foundation with an eye on everybody because they had achieved so much for the state of Kansas. It probably would not have been a good idea for the chancellor to buck Dr. Barker so hard that he lost his psychology department. Politically, it is an interesting problem for the chancellor. So you were there how long, under Dr. Barker, teaching?

A: I was there, in Lawrence, for two years, '47-'49. From there I went to the VA Hospital in Topeka for my last two years in training.

Q: Does that constitute an internship or a residency or what?

A: It was more like an internship, but it was a four-year course that was set up academically in Lawrence and clinically in Topeka. In Lawrence

was where you got your academic credit.

Q: Now since this was a Ph.D. program, you expected to do original research and publish something. What was the subject for your research?

A: It was the ... I'm trying to think of what my dissertation was! The effect of brain damage in motorized behavior. Since we had a very, very large population at the VA hospital that had had brain damage from external sources as well as from noxious kinds of materials.

Q: Chemical warfare, mustard gas ...

A: Yes. Carbon monoxide and brain injuries, internally from bullets or shrapnel...

Q: Emergencies, or whatever you want to call them. How many subjects did you study, approximately?

A: Oh ...

Q: Were you allowed to concentrate on just a few or did you have to have one hundred?

A: I had to have quite a number primarily because of the narrow range in which I was trying to work, I had to do about twice as many as I could actually use. I would say over one hundred, but I was making a comparison. You see I was dealing with brain damage, various kinds of brain damage. I had to have 100 normals as well to make the comparison.

Q: Yes, so where did you find your control group?

A: Generally what I did was make it known to a staff in the hospitals. So I had quite a number of volunteers. I found some of my volunteers were not what we would consider in the normal range either! Then that made a quandary because how could I tell them!

Q: So you were discovering that they needed assistance and needed to

know what their medical problems were. So how did you solve that dilemma?
What did you decide to do?

A: Usually, I would contend that they wouldn't be used in the study at all. Usually I told them that there was some things that looked like maybe they should look in to.

Q: So as tactfully as you could, you were kind of nudging them to the right decision. Now did you continue your interest in the brain damaged person, because your work in the VA hospital then, that was one aspect of the troubles that those people had. So after you had your degree, I know you did ... I'm told that ... did a test for the brain damaged come out of your research?

A: Yes.

Q: And you published then, the Phelps-Scheerer Organic Battery Test.

A: Which I reported to the American Psychological Association and a member of the VA hospitals.

Q: Did that become fairly widely used, then for a while?

A: Parts of it did, because there was one part that so markedly differentiated that it could pretty much guarantee the results of it.

Q: So you had really made a breakthrough.

A: Yes, and there were a number of individuals who in one way or another went to other VA hospitals and they had used it.

Q: Then how did your career progress after you got your doctorate? Where did you go then to ... was it then that you came to Kansas City? Were you working with Sylvia Allen and others?

A: Yes at the Mental Hygiene Clinic at the VA.

Q: And you stayed there quite a long while at this VA hospital.

A: I was at the Mental Hygiene Clinic which was separate, but this hospital had just been built; it wasn't in operation. So it was later that the Mental Hygiene Clinic was added to the hospital.

Q: Now you were saying that there were just three psychologists ...

A: Psychiatrists.

Q: Psychiatrists in Kansas City at that time. So you were probably a close knit, small group then that ...

A: We met every month. The psychiatrist, the psychologist, and those who were interested in your area. They met at the clinic every month. So everybody knew what was going on. So when I decided that after being in Kansas City for three years I could go into private practice, I broached the subject at this monthly group meeting so that they were all aware. So consequently, I got people referred to me. These people were very, very nice.

Q: Now I noticed that although you'd been working a lot with adults and undoubtedly adult males, because of the veteran's hospital, you began doing work with children.

A: I began doing work with children primarily because when I opened my private office, the way in which I began to swell my clientele was to give talks at PTA meetings. Usually at every PTA meeting I would get three or four calls from there and so I began to focus on children of all ages as a matter of fact. And it was at this time that I finally began to work directly with the Pious The Tenth Boys Orphanage.

Q: So there was a Pious The Tenth Orphanage for ...

A: For boys, which at the present time the outgrowth of that is now known as Marillac School for Emotionally Disturbed Children.

Q: So, it's an archdiocese or diocese ...

A: It's a diocese, yes. As a matter of fact the sisters who for years and years and years ran the school were the Daughters of Charity.

Q: That must be, let's see that was in the 1950's, so that's over thirty years, your association with that institution.

A: Oh yes.

Q: Now were parents coming to you, or were most of those first referrals from principals and teachers?

A: Most of those first referrals were from parents who at the PTA meetings would ask certain kinds of questions, because they had problem children or children who were not able to keep up with the regular students.

Q: Were you seeing any particular, common problems that these children had. Was there anything prevalent that was causing them to be problem children?

A: I think it was probably the fact that they did not have an IQ to measure up to the expectation of parents. They had never been assessed in any way to see.

Q: So the parents had their own expectations and they could have been totally unrealistic for their child. And the child, in his or her frustration was acting out or ...

A: It worked both ways. The children had an IQ that was way above and consequently school was a real bore and so there were problems.

Q: Absolutely. We still are having that problem today. Were you finding that they hadn't really tested children for their ability to read? I'm finding it interesting to hear today what causes they are finding in common among juvenile delinquent teenagers, let's say from twelve on up and

one of the problems is they can't read. Some of those children have dyslexia, which prevents easy reading. And then that just adds fuel to the fire and some of these kids become antisocial, causing problems. Were there any things that you could see back in the early '50's that were similar?

A: Somewhat. Dyslexia wasn't known at that particular time, or at least it wasn't focused on at all. It was as much a behavioral problem as much as it was one of the intellectual variety. Because not being able to do the work at the level that was expected, the child had to get attention in some way, and so in a sense they got more than the regular students, as a matter of fact.

Q: The teacher would have to spend an awful lot of time. What about the child that we call today, hyperactive, that they are giving Ritalin to? Were you seeing hyperactive children?

A: Not at the very beginning. I guess in the middle part of my practice I was, because some of those were almost unmanageable. But this only came a little bit later. It is rather interesting. I started out with children in my practice, which I opened in 1955 in the YW Building, which is no more.

Q: And where was that located? Was that downtown?

A: 1020 McGee.

Q: Oh.

A: The reason I was there was because when I was ready to open up a practice trying to find an office in Kansas City was something else.

Q: Really? You mean people didn't want to rent some space to you?

A: That's correct.

Q: But the YMCA came through and ..

A: The YWCA.

Q: Oh, the women.

A: Yes, the YWCA. The YW, you know, was a place where many people stopped off because they had hotel facilities, swimming pool, everything. It was quite a large building there, 1020. It was really a shock to most people when they tore that down and built the a new YW which is a one-story building.

Q: What a shame; what a shame. But they had office space there, and you were able to lease a space. How long were you located there?

A: Until 1964. Then they had to tear it down. And then I moved over to 12th and Grand. By that time things had opened up considerably. By that time my practice was entirely different. I started out with children and I worked for about the first four years almost entirely with children of all ages up to the teens. Then I began to do some group practice and some marital counseling and then the last six or seven years of my practice I had at that time about four of my former students who were also in my practice. One was taking children, one teenagers, one the group, and I was doing work with the clergy only.

Q: How did that ... did that grow out of the Pious the Tenth work or did it come through another way?

A: Through another way. The testing of the children that led to the diocese who came in to ask would I, just as a routine kind of a procedure, test those individuals who were getting ready to enter the seminary. So I set up a testing program that was the first in the country, as a matter of fact, for those who were going to enter the seminary, the priesthood, and later the convent.

Q: Now why had they decided that they wanted these young men tested?

A: Because there were so many who were coming in and just falling out.

Q: The dropout rate was just too high.

A: And their investment in these men ...

Q: So if someone wanted to enter the seminary, it really didn't cost them very much. They were welcomed with open arms because they were going to become priests.

A: That's right. And there was ???, who became vocation director of the diocese and he and I got together and we talked about it, and he went back to Rome to find out whether or not this could be set up, brought the blessing there from the Pope on affirmative action and he brought that back for my family.

Q: So you have the Pope's signatures on a decree saying yes, this is a good idea. Is it written in Latin?

A: Yes, oh yes. And then it was, I guess, after testing programs started here at the diocese, it began to catch on in other dioceses.

Q: So then did you travel and help them set up their programs?

A: Actually, I didn't. There were some people who did the testing for me. There were nuns from Jefferson City ... and then of course we'd get some from the areas like New York or somewhere else. Then it got to be kind of widely circulated, and so some of the other denominations, like the Baptists and the Methodists and the LDS ... the LDS I did all of theirs. These were for missionaries who were going overseas.

Q: Well now my question would be how do you devise a test to predict whether or not someone is really ministerial or priest material? What did

you put together?

A: Ours was ... this is what we were attempting to do, it was not the final decision anyway. That was always made by the archbishop. But what ours did was to determine whether this individual had a great degree of social interaction and theoretical endowment and something that would indicate ...

Q: Some special spirituality in that person ...

A: Their attitudes. The practical, common sense type of behavior. We did a study of values test which cut across concrete thinking. We were also interested in how much savvy these people had. If you are going to study theology, and so forth, you've got to have some ability up here if you're going to understand it. Although we had used the IQ, we weren't really to concerned if it was average. Because if the average IQ was there and the motivation high ...

Q: And the dedication and the commitment to that kind of a life would prevail.

A: After about the first two years, what developed was a profile of those who were succeeded, you see. We then had some norm to go by. When an individual came out with a profile, then we could take that profile and profile those who had really made it and see how it compares to those being tested.

Q: You could almost do an overlap. To see how the lines, lined up.

A: What we found was that for some group that didn't have it in certain areas, but being aware of their weakness, you could help bolster that. You see, and then you had some where the profile came out who really wanted to be bishop the first year, you know.

Q: Yes. An ambition test! So that's ...

A: But that testing program went on and on and on, because as my practice grew, I couldn't do it all. We had one individual in the office who did all the analysis and testing, and then we went to Jefferson City and to Des Moines and so forth. As a matter of fact she still does this.

Q: So she is still doing this? Who is that; what is her name?

A: Lucille Liebert.

Q: So she is still carrying down that particular task.

A: But you see as I got into that, I got interactive with, more and more clergy and so this began to come up, first with the Catholic Church, but it spread from there to other denominations, and some of my best customers were the Presbyterians. Because their setup is so different.

Q: How does that one differ?

A: The Catholics, the Methodists, the Baptists all have bishops.

Q: That's right.

A: And a bishop moves their pastors around and it is not questioned. If he says "you go there" you go there. Presbyterians, it is the congregation who hires them.

Q: That's right. So it's a matter of salesmanship with regard to ... well I hate to put it that way, but you do end up being a minister who has to market yourself.

A: Not only that, but you have as many bosses as you have in the congregation. You see there is where the problem is, because if there are certain factions who are set against you, you are out. If certain factions get against you, they'll make sure you stay where you are. So that I then began to get called in across the board, all denominations. I did all of

the missionary testing for the LDS. Now theirs was irregular. They bring them in from Australia here.

Q: Oh my.

A: Theirs was a little bit like the Baptists', and when they would get a certain missionary, I would do testing and then they would send him to a psychiatrist and sometimes both of us would send in reports individually...

Q: On how to convert from Protestant. Well, now, we haven't really gotten into this very much, but it seems like a good time to do it. Your sister converted to Catholicism as a young person and married into the Catholic church. I take it that your wife of now over fifty years, was a Catholic when you met her.

A: No.

Q: She was not. Now were you Catholic?

A: No.

Q: So how did you end up?

A: After we got married, she was a Baptist and I a Methodist and it was after that time that one of the Catholic sisters came to call. She impressed my wife and she talked with me and she felt that we needed unity in religion if children were coming.

Q: Now were these nuns from a school that was nearby or a church?

A: They were from a church.

Q: Were you living close to that particular church?

A: It was about seven or eight blocks from my home. That was the school where my children would go.

Q: Was it the practice of these nuns ... I mean this almost sounds

like missionary work. So they were proselytizing. They would go out into neighborhoods in a certain radius around the parish. Your wife must have found that very comforting to have these women come. Dorothy, your sister, must have been pleased as well.

A: She was.

Q: So the seeds in a way were also planted for your interest in working with the church as a practicing psychologists. And one of your daughters decided to become a nun.

A: Yes, in that same order.

Q: In that same order....

We are continuing a conversation with Dr. Phelps this morning and we have been talking about his work with the Kansas City Diocese in counseling the priests in testing for the acceptability of someone becoming a priest and coming up with a profile which is all very ground breaking kinds of work. Probably, there weren't very many others involved in this when you first started; is that correct? And then the example that Kansas City and some of the other cities in Missouri, their example must have been picked up across the country and used widely.

A: Very widely.

Q: Were you ever able to get together with others who were involved in developing these profiles in other parts of the county to compare notes and find out what they were doing?

A: I think this occurred on the vocation directory all over the map. One of the ones who started here became a monsignor and from that he was then sent to Washington as their national vocational director. He was there for years and years and years. He is now back with our diocese.

Q: Oh. So that's saying something. Now you were doing all these really substantial kinds of projects. You were still associated with the VA Hospital.

A: That was my regular job.

Q: The rest of this was just your spare time ... your moonlighting?

A: Yes.

Q: What other kinds of things were happening at the VA Hospital as far as significant breakthroughs, things that you also discovered. You were telling me last week that you had men who were originally in the Spanish/American War and World War I. Then you had World War II. Then we had Korea. Then Viet Nam which is the latest. I can recall; I was teaching at Louisiana State University and had quite a few young men who were starting their college careers after having served in Viet Nam. There were a lot of really intelligent and very troubled young men who came out of that war. So what were you finding about ... with so many wars it seemed like or some kind of military action that we have been involved in over the years from the beginning of the '20's right on through. What kinds of things were you finding that these men needed work on?

Q: Well, for all the wars up to the Korean conflict, each individual who was in those wars came back as a hero. From the Korean conflict and the Viet Nam War, as a matter of fact Viet Nam was almost looked down upon. You were seen as being a chump for having gone. Consequently you had the difference in attitude towards these individuals because of the way society accepted them. Generally for World War I or World War II it was the emotional shock that they had along with whatever physical damage they might have. And this is what you had to deal with. Stress under fire, this kind

of thing. Where that was enduring over a period of time, it left a mark that you couldn't erase.

Q: There wasn't really anything that they could do.

A: Well, to give you the example that I used to give to them. You can take a rubber band, put it across both your hands like this and pull it out and stretch it like this. When you put your hands back together again, it will come back to its old shape. You can take it and pull it out like this and stretch it again for a while, and then after you bring your hands back together, it will never go back to its original shape again. It will stretch back to some extent. This is the kind of thing that I attempted to give to them. You can come back. You can reach a certain level, but it will never be what your potential would have been had this not occurred. It's kind of a negative thing, but it's realistic. You can get them to where they can figure that they now have to function at a different level or in a different direction.

Q: Yes, if they can recognize it and find some way to deal with it or let it not be a detriment to whatever it is they decide or attempt to do. So their attitude as World War I and World War II veterans at least they came home and the people were proud of them; they could be proud of themselves, but that wasn't true for Korea and it certainly wasn't true for Viet Nam. There was no homecoming celebration. To have that Viet Nam War memorial in Washington, DC has done a tremendous thing psychologically for all of our Viet Nam veterans.

A: But you see neither one of those wars was fought in the old traditional warfare. Consequently, you didn't go up against a certain army here or a certain infantry here. You never knew where the enemy was.

Q: The result of having shot something off, a cannon, or dropped a bomb or whatever, wasn't seen.

A: Suddenly you would get orders to march to a certain place, because you'd started out somewhere and there would be mines all over and you'd move. This you see was a different kind of warfare. Consequently, whereas in World War I, World War II, what they resorted to for relaxation was a couple of snorts, that's not what they did in Viet Nam. They got all kinds of dope.

Q: That is true.

A: And it was so mixed up, you didn't know how to treat it.

Q: Are you saying that you didn't know... what was ordinarily psychologically produced versus drug induced, was that one of the problems?

A: Well, if you used marijuana or hashish or something like this, but when they took heroine, and God knows what besides that ... you see here you've got a different kind of a problem. LSD was quite popular among the college groups at that time.

Q: Dr. Timothy Leary didn't do very many of us a favor, did he?

A: No. And so, even though we got them as in other wars, generally what you got with a World War II individual, you could get him back to where he could accept himself with his limitations and could plan and structure his life. Things went pretty well. But you see with one you had been on heroine all along, you could get him back to where he would start out, do very, very well and may even make some progress, and then suddenly have a flashback and everything starts all over again. This was our difficulty. The cynicism was greater after that conflict than any other.

Q: How were you able to stay on top of all of this? Were there

courses then that the VA hospitals would put together to train all of its medical staff and keep them up to date on all of the kinds of things they were finding? How did the VA Hospital deal with the fantastic revolution in the military problem?

A: They put a greater emphasis on education. In the last four years I was with the VA, I was not the chief of psychology service, I was in education and training.

Q: So you made the transition yourself.

A: Oh yes. One of things that was required was that the staff would deal directly with the patients. You've got to have a certain amount of education, continuing education going on to keep up with the state of the art. And so there were monies set aside for that. It was in the last four years that I was there, and that has continued on. There is now a division ... I was associate chief of staff for education and training. That means that the board here had a certain amount of money set aside for education. As a matter of fact in that division your salary depended upon it.

Q: Does your certification also depend upon it?

A: Oh yes.

Q: In order to maintain your certification you have to show them that you gave a certain number of courses in a certain period of time.

A: A certain number of credits. Psychology is doing the same thing.

Q: That's good, that's very good. We have got to do that because it seems like things are changing so fast.

A: That is so true. Just look at the advent of the drugs for handling emotions. Initially, they thought that that was going to be the answer for everybody.

Q: If you could just calm everybody down, and make them tranquil, but that's not good. When did they wake up to that?

A: Well, let's see. Serpasil and Thorazine came in somewhere in the late '50's, or early '60's and they thought that this was the panacea for everything. It took them about four years to find out that you could make them very well tranquilized and so forth but in all other ways we were right where we started. I mean nothing happened.

Q: It didn't cure anything.

A: That's it exactly. So we had to take another look at it. With some they had to be worked step by step. Some you just have to give up on. In the last years that I was at the VA Hospital in Topeka, the present "fad" was lobotomy. You find very few of those going on now in any VA hospital, although they still perform a few of them.

Q: And I think the few places here were for certain situations... I had heard of one where the person was having convulsions. Electric shock treatment is still used ...

A: Oh that's still used quite a bit.

Q: That's right, lobotomy really has phased out, but electric shock therapy is still used. So at the VA hospital here, you were rising through the ranks and getting more and more responsibility, weren't you?

A: And fighting every step of the way.

Q: Tell me what you fought about.

A: To make any kind of progress. When I came here, I already had a doctoral degree in psychology. Consequently, I started out as a GS-11. Well, our personnel officer rebelled and fought all the way up, and I mean he was somewhere around a ten. So when my journeyman period was I up, I was

to go to a twelve. Well, he was not going to hear of that.

Q: Because you would be higher than he was, that was the reason?

A: Yes. That didn't work very well. I finally had to go to Washington to get my twelve. Then when I was moved out here to the hospital, I was chief of the entire psychology department, while all the other chiefs were thirteens. So I began to fight for the thirteen.

Q: Now was it partly the fact that the personnel office wanted to keep some sort of a status quo, or were they trying to keep you in your place.

A: That was it, because the personnel people I was bucking against had long since gone.

Q: Were you the first black who had this kind of a possibility.

A: Yes. I was in Ebony magazine way back when ... ??? So I got to be a thirteen, and I lived with that and could not go anywhere else.

Q: Yes, that was the top.

A: For me. When I retired, the individual whom I recommended to take my place was a thirteen when he came in.

Q: It did not straighten out. Was there no affirmative action plan?

A: We had one. As a matter of fact I was the one who set it up.

Q: So you were striving to achieve equity within the VA Hospital within the governmental system.

A: Not only that, but I was very active as an EEO officer to help others. I needed somebody to help me!

Q: Yes, you needed your own mentor. You were so busy mentoring other people. Now, things obviously were loosening up within Kansas City.

A: Oh yes.

Q: And we are getting into the '60's now, which was a very exciting spot, a revolutionary time. So you were well placed because you were already fighting that fight within the system. Did this kind of bring you to the attention of others so you were kind of sought after to help ease racial tensions or help cut down the division between the races? You served in various cabinet posts.

A: Yes. As a matter of fact my wife was more heavily involved in that because she worked with Ruth Emert to break down racism in the restaurants. She was right on the forefront with that. She would go to various places and sit in.

Q: Interesting. Had she opened her own restaurant or had she kept up her catering business?

A: This was just a limited business.

Q: When the girls were born, did she give up the catering business?

A: Initially, yes, but after they got into school, then she went back to it. They called her and told her they needed her.

Q: Well, how did you get involved then with the various things that you did. Because I know you served on the Jackson County Civil Rights Commission. Didn't you also serve on a hearing board for the Kansas City Police Department? How did you get involved? If they didn't have enough sense to look for you, how did you get involved?

A: After I had my office in Kansas City, I had a regular weekly meeting with the YW staff. With that I also got interested in the mental health program. We started the Mental Health Association as you see it now. One day at lunch we decided that Kansas City needs a Mental Health Association. So we got ten people who were interested in it, and each of us

put in \$50 and that's the way it started. So that became the board of directors.

Q: Was that an integrated group?

A: Yes, yes.

Q: So YWCA was really bringing together people and they were living up to the Christian principles. And the distraught housewives you were talking about, were they an integrated group as well?

A: Yes.

Q: When did Jackson County set up its Civil Rights Commission?

A: Let's see. I guess it must have been in the late '50's. Charles Wheeler was western judge. I had worked with him and consequently when he became western judge and I think Baldwin was the one he headed, and when he moved, because I was on the Commission, he took the chairmanship and he was very much involved -- Curry, Charles Curry, he was presiding judge of the county.

Q: What kind of problems did you have to solve in the Civil Rights Commission? What were some of the issues you were facing in the sixties?

A: Well, we had blacks, if they worked downtown, the only place they could eat lunch was by coming back to 12th street or eighteenth street. There was no place downtown that we could eat. That's what my wife was involved with, the social action committee. You couldn't go into the theatres except for certain spots where you could go, and the hotels weren't open to us either. This kind of thing needed involvement along with getting some individuals within the city and county. Being a VA employee, I could not become involved in political activities. That is one reason why I was never involved. They wanted me to run for the School Board one time. I

think the reason they wanted me to run was because I was pretty well known, because whoever else was running it was not. It wasn't that they were against him. I think that was the way we got around electing minorities. I knew him to pit blacks against blacks.

The Hallmark Company set up a panel for which they gave scholarships, and I mean complete four-year scholarships to those individuals who are showing a real potential and are qualified. This is for all of the US. The applications are all sent here, and I was asked to be one of the judging panel. That's the way that I got involved.

Q: And one thing led to another.

A: Yes.

Q: Were you involved, or was your wife ever involved in the first desegregation order?

A: No. I was involved when the teachers had their first strike. The mayor called a committee of twelve. They looked at what was going on with the salary set up. That was the first strike I was ever involved in.

Q: How long did the strike go on?

A: I don't remember. We had more meetings. It seemed as if it was forever.

Q: Was the formation of the teachers union ... did that follow this incident?

A: No. It was ahead of it. That is why they were able to strike; they had a union. It had never tested its strength though.

Q: Was the union integrated, or did you have a teacher's union and a black teacher's union?

A: The union was integrated; I don't think we ever did have a

separate union.

Q: That's interesting, because the musicians everywhere, there's a black musicians union. They have such a long, glorious history on their own, sometimes its not even a matter of racism. It's just that they are so loyal to their own organization, it seems foolish to bring it together with other organizations.

A: Integration in the schools was not achieved because they didn't integrate teachers.

Q: Good grief! At least they have overcome that this time around. My husband will say to me that a certain number of people have asked to transfer in his school, and he's got to code it by what sex they are, because they would like to have a mix of men and women. He's got to code by nationality for race. He knows how many Americans he has, how many blacks and Spanish speaking. He tries to balance it.

A: ???

Q: One thing at a time. In the middle to late '70's the church was beginning to really officially recognize the wonderful contributions you'd been making. I understand that you heard from the Pope ... Knight of Holy Sepulchre.

A: In '66.

Q: All right, tell me what happened. Did you realize that you were going to be nominated or chosen for the honor.

A: No. I never thought about that. I worked in the church, because of Serra and worked as a consultant and primarily because my office tested the seminary candidates for getting out of the priesthood. Serra is a Catholic men's organization which primary purpose was to recruit young men

for the priesthood.

Q: Are you still active as a therapist these days?

A: Yes.

Q: Good.

A: They keep trying to keep me in there. Priests are scarce. Nova Scotia is the only place with a surplus.

Q: The situation in Mississippi was so dyer in the '60's, because we moved from Wisconsin to Catysburg in 1967, that there were no American Catholic priests in southern Mississippi. We were part of an Irish mission, and all of our priests were from Ireland. That just absolutely stunned me and made me realize for the first time how serious the situation was getting with our not having enough priests to even cover the various parts of the US, Catholic priests.

A: Yet there were major Black seminaries in Mississippi.

Q: Yes? Where is it located? Is it north or south?

A: I couldn't tell you where, but I know it is there.

Q: It might be Jackson. I wonder if it isn't on the Gulf Coast.

Because a lot of ... northern Mississippi and northern Louisiana are not very Catholic. You really have a Baptist belt there. There is almost like a twenty mile horizontal line that goes through those two states and below that you have Catholics.

A: That's where Joliet and Marquette went from Canada. That's where Catholics settled.

Q: How were you selected for Knights of Holy Sepulchre.

A: Your name is turned in to the pool and the Bishop usually consults with your pastor to see just exactly what you have done to qualify. It is

then sent in to Rome.

Q: Have there been any other blacks nominated that you recognize to your knowledge? Were you one of the first blacks?

A: Now that you mention it. When I came in, as a matter of fact, there weren't that many in this particular area, because I went in with what they call the Southern Lieutenancy in Tulsa. Subsequent to that we had grown enough so that we had a northern contingency. Other than that there weren't any when I went in. I'm not sure.

Q: So you were not only the first in the Kansas City area...

A: Oh yes. I was the first in the southern contingency as a matter of fact. Subsequently, Rashy Moten (black) was elected about three years ago, he was the former head of Catholic charities. It is mandatory that you have to make a visit to Rome.

Q: Oh, that wouldn't be hard to take.

A: And then you must make a visit to the Holy Land.

Q: Oh, that's wonderful.

A: So, in '66 when I was inducted, that summer we flew out to Rome. We had meetings with the Pope set up, and then because all of the airlines were on strike, we got there fifteen hours late.

Q: Oh my goodness.

A: So, we missed that. We went to an American college in Rome and we visited with the Vatican. And then we went to Jerusalem, and the patriarch of Jerusalem received us. They gave us a big plaque.

Q: Your wife was honored as well?

A: Not at that particular time, but later on she was.

Q: Did you have a special title?

A: Yes. I was given the Grand Cross, Knights Commanders with Grand Cross.

Q: So you were elevated to the highest honor. What kind of responsibilities does this honor bring? Do you meet on an annual basis?

A: Yes, we have an annual meeting of all the lieutenants. There are in the U.S., northern lieutenancies, eastern lieutenancies, southern lieutenancies. We have representation from Canadians contingencies too and from Rome, too. We have an annual meeting and a dinner here. They don't come out in their full regalia, but they do wear whatever decorations they have. After that there are member who usually parade around in robes and caps and gowns and so forth to accompany the priest at Corpus Christi.

Q: And then does the group, is it mainly honorary or do they take on some tasks?

A: If you would like to make a donation to the Holy Land, that is one of the things that each contingency does. It has the task of maintaining the schools, the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem.

Q: Well, I understand that you really began working with problems of aging. Before you were ready to retire yourself. I was thinking about that, that you had been involved in the issues of aging and retirement. I am thinking that probably that made your transition much more easy, because you were so involved. What kinds of things were you doing then?

A: Well, the very first move in that direction was in '57, when I was asked by the V.A. to conduct a seminar, a pre-retirement seminar. I imagine there weren't more than ten people there. It was just for that group.

Q: How close were those particular ten people to retirement? Were they a few months? Was it a year?

A: No, you had to be within two or three years of retiring.

Q: Did they require that you retire at a certain age?

A: Oh yes.

Q: And what was that?

A: Sixty-five.

Q: You couldn't get any extensions to go to age 70?

A: Not initially.

Q: That had to be approved. All right so you began with this group of ten, and you were 64 years old.

A: You see the reason most people would not go, because it gave your age away! Consequently ...

Q: So vanity was a big part of it.

A: So, as that evolved, we then began to set up pre-retirement for each one of the civil service entities. This was the VA only we're talking about.

Q: So it was a civil service group, federal ...

A: The way it is now.

Q: That came later.

A: Yes. And then after I conducted the VA pre-retirement, some of the others began to ask -- like GSA, I've been out there, IRS, well IRS still has their own, they don't believe in any togetherness. Then I also did seminars at private corporations, like Lipton Tea and who is the women's cosmetic group that goes from door to door -- Avon. I did seminars for them, and for some of the banks. So when they established the Federal Executive Board, there was a representative from all of the federal agencies. They decided that that would be the kind of thing that they

should set seminars up. So they set them up and I think Ruby Jane Hall from GSA, I think we must have had at least thirty pre-retirement seminars. It is rather interesting how they have grown, because they met in the new federal building, after they built that, in their auditorium, I think it held 250.

Q: So you had to have a big hall to hold all the people who would attend.

A: Initially, it wasn't full, but it got to where they had to bring in extra chairs and so forth. Then finally we reached the point where we held it down in the Bingo hall.

Q: How many people can that hold?

A: Around 400. Then the last two that I involved with, one was held at Bartle Hall and the last one, this year, which was just about a month ago, was over at the convention hall in Kansas City, Kansas.

Q: So you started with ten and ...

Q: We are continuing our conversation on June 20 with Dr. Phelps, and you were about to say ...

A: Asked would I teach a course in the nursing division at the KU Med Center, which I did. Since the VA hospital was associated with KU Med Center, because psychiatric interns and other people came over for their clinical practice at the VA hospital, I was put on the staff. So that was for the teaching. And I think it was about that time that Martin Scheerer, from the University of Kansas died.

Q: What position had he held?

A: He was a professor of physiological psychology. As a matter of fact, he was my thesis advisor. So when they asked me would I finish out

his term ...

Q: And his term was the rest of that particular academic year.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: How many courses was he teaching that semester?

A: He was just teaching one.

Q: So you started commuting between here and Lawrence.

A: Yes, that's right. Then the next year I taught the honors division course in psychology, which was an evening division course. That met twice a week.

Q: Two nights.

A: Yes, two nights.

Q: Who were these students, then? Were they the more advanced students in the psychology department?

A: Yes, they were psychology majors.

Q: And they were perhaps seniors?

A: Well, juniors and seniors.

Q: Was this an honors course? Did they have to do a special research project?

A: Yes. That was something.

Q: Tell me about that. How many students would you have at a time?

A: Twenty-four, because we had to limit it. We limited this enrollment. It was a manageable group, and when they got there, of course, I tried to keep a balance, as always, of men and women. But, of course, I had all sizes, shapes, colors and everything else in there.

Q: And probably Asians as well.

A: I tried to, the very first day, I would pair them up. This was

going to be their partner whom they would have to work with. I tried to get as much the opposites as I could in each pair. It was really interesting to note what happened that first day when they met their partner. Some said later on, they didn't say so then, that they were scared to death of their partner.

Q: Oh really?

A: Oh yes. I had paired one white girl from Alabama with a militant Black Chicagoan. At the end of the semester I knew they were working so closely that you would not have really thought it was possible. As a matter of fact that group that first year, they became so closely knit, that after class was over, one Sunday morning in the summer, the whole group came down here to meet here at my house.

Q: It must have been quite a revelation. That respect that they learned to have for each other. Yet it certainly was not an experience they could have had any place else.

A: Oh no.

Q: Well you've done some work on the basis of racism. Did some of your ideas for that come out of such a course as this honors course? Were you able to bring such extremely different types of people together?

A: Yes, as a matter of fact I think that was probably one of the primary bases that I used in the Life Enrichment. That explained things. Well I told them my Life Enrichment. Now this was a group of over 65 people, who had withdrawn from society and what we had done was to get ministers and rabbis to bring them into the group, because if we had just gone out and tried to bring them in they wouldn't have come.

Q: They wouldn't have volunteered.

A: Not at all. But they did become because of that. Once they got there and they got interested in it, thereafter we did no recruiting at all. They did it. Are still doing it.

Q: So by word of mouth ...

A: They would bring people in to visit, because visitors were always welcome. But if you came to visit, they would just suck you right into the group, you know, and you'd be just part of it. Well I told them that they did not observe as much as they could, and I told them also they were snobs.

Q: I'll bet they were happy to hear that.

A: They were really hurt. But I told them at the next meeting I wanted each one of them to bring a lemon. And so on my way home I stopped at the grocery store and picked up six lemons, because I knew somebody would forget. And they did. When they all had their lemons, and I said "Everybody stand up and stand in a circle." And they stood in a circle and they had a lemon in hand. "Now what I want you to do is to pass your lemon to the person on your right." And so they all passed the lemon to the person on the right. I said, "Now keep passing until your lemon gets back to you."

Q: And how many people were able to recognize their lemon.

A: That's when the fight started. Somebody knew somebody else had their lemon, and boy it was chaos. But you see it really is an illustration that brings it home to you. I told them "You're going to learn an awful lot, and you will learn from one another. Because you can learn from everybody you meet." So this was what they were told the first day. It was constantly proven. We had ten sessions in each one of our spring, summer, fall and winter groups. After the third sessions in each one of our ten we

had an evaluation and what did we want to take up for the next weeks. So they were involved in what it was that they were getting into.

Q: Some ownership of it. You practice what you preach! So your work at KU began as just going in as a person to take over the courses for a professor who had died and it developed into something a whole lot more. Were there any blacks teaching at KU in that department at that time? I remember you were the first when you were getting your masters and Ph.D., you were the first and probably the only black instructor. What were the circumstances when you went back then to take over for the professor and to teach other courses?

A: Well, now let's see. Initially when I was part of the KU Med Center, I was an associate professor. Then I moved up to professor.

Q: How quickly did those promotions come?

A: Quite quickly.

Q: Because they really did have to recognize all the work that you had been doing.

A: I think they had to. They probably had about two or three black professors. Because they started the Black Studies Program. So they had about three black professors, I think.

Q: Now three in the whole university or just the psychology department.

A: No, no. In the university.

Q: Were you the only one, then, in the psychology department? Were you the first associate professor, first black associate professor and first black professor in psychology?

A: Yes, because at that time not many blacks finished in psychology.

There were a number of them at the start.

Q: They didn't stay with it?

A: No. There was one girl. That was in experimental. This was after I was over here at KU. You see KU students did their clinical work in the VA if they were in the VA program. In the Kansas City VA, I had a number of students who came through here. Some of them did their last year, their internship with me. In fact, one of them became my boss in Washington!

Q: What is that person's name?

A: Hal Dickman.

Q: Then what else happened at ...

A: The name came to me, Hal Dickman.

Q: Hal Dickman. He had been a student of yours and then took his internship under you. What position did he take in Washington to make him your boss?

A: Psychology department in the VA system.

Q: Oh. And he's done well.

A: Oh yes. He lives in Palo Alto now.

Q: That's a wonderful place to be. How did you find you were accepted if there were only about three of you black professors on campus. Black Studies was really just being introduced as an area that was all right to study and major in I suppose. How were you accepted?

A: No problem. I never had any problem with students anyway. This I think is one of the primary ... I taught personality to 150 in a class. You can't even get to know the students in that kind of a setting.

Q: Who was the chancellor when you went back? Was it Murphy? Or was

it after that?

A: I think he was when I first went back to KU. Let's see it was Murphy, Wescoe, and ...

Q: I imagine that it was Murphy.

A: Yes. Wescoe was part of the Medical School here in K.C.

Q: So really the administration's attitude about blacks were that they shouldn't be allowed to teach, disappeared with Lindley.

A: They didn't disappear with Lindley. I'd say that's when barriers started to come down. Some individual professors, I imagine, ... well it's like anybody else, you know. Some personalities just don't click.

Q: Which of the chancellors, that you had a chance to get to know, were the more enlightened ones and really made it possible for black students and black faculty members to achieve what they were able to achieve?

A: Well whoever it was fifteen years ago. Because they began to have ...

Q: Was that the early '70's?

A: Some of the whereabouts were being set up. A department which was for advising black students and black students themselves began to clamor for their own organization and so forth. That is something that I wouldn't have any part of at all.

Q: Because that perpetrates the separateness.

A: Yes. But this was the kind of thing they wanted and needed. I went back to talk to that group several times.

Q: Did you feel the same way about the university offering the course in Black Studies? Or was that a different issue?

A: That's a different issue. I think primarily it's like comparative religion. You might as well know what it is you don't like and what it's about and why you don't like it.

Q: The black student union, I suppose, is more like setting up the black fraternity, or they have political issues they want to address, but they're also separating.

A: When I went there, I joined the black fraternity, and I thought that was quite helpful to me. As a matter of fact, I was president of the Kappa Alpha Psi alumni of Topeka and the same here in Kansas City. Interestingly enough, I was inducted in the Sig Alpha Epsilon chapter, which is a white fraternity, alumni here in Kansas City, because they honored four of us for outstanding work; one of them was a pitcher of the Royals at the same time when I went in. And the Sig Alpha Epsilon fraternity, I mean they still write me letters and all of this. I couldn't even go into the house when I was in Lawrence, when I was a student!

Q: That's right, you were an undergraduate then. Not unless you worked there. You could come in if you were going to wait on tables or something like that. That was the only way at that time. So they have really come around. I wonder how well integrated they are as a fraternity.

A: As a matter of fact, at the time that movement was going on, one of the black fraternities in Kansas took in a white member. And goodness gracious it was like bringing a man into a girls' school!

Q: Yes, yes. You know like one of the seven sister schools out east. When they decided to admit boys. You said that you were beginning to be invited to serve on KU committees by the various chancellors, or by particular chancellors. What kind of committee were they asking you to

serve on?

A: A committee for choosing the individuals of the alumni group who had made a contribution towards the bettering of KU or distinctive contributions. There are certain types of honors that they give for each one of these. I served on that committee. I was asked to serve on committees on which there were setting up the kind of structure for the way in which they induced more minority graduate students to come to KU.

Q: I'm glad you mentioned that, because I was going to ask you if you had some advice for the university right now. What could they do to encourage more blacks to go to school at KU and go into some of these professions where obviously blacks are needed? What kind of recruiting should they be doing?

A: Well, actually, they have some very, very outstanding departments at the university.

Q: For example?

A: Fine Arts and Clinical Psychology are two. Liberal Arts and the Geology Departments are also quite good.

Q: These are attractive ...

A: These are outstanding. You see if somebody asked me in psychology, "Where should I go if I want to be a consulting psychologist?" even though I'm a KU graduate I would say MU, because this is where they stand out. But for clinical, KU -- this is where you should go. In Fine Arts, KU is very, very good. In terms of Journalism, I think it would be kind of a toss up between the two, MU and KU. For Law School, I think KU's is very good, but I still would say Washburn is better.

Q: So, you as a person, would be looking out for the best interest of

that young student.

A: Kansas State is moving more and more. They used to be horribly bad in psychology, but they are moving up. As a matter of fact, there are some people who were part of the Topeka group who are on the staff at K-State. I gave a talk there about two months ago, I guess, and I got to see some of my old classmates from the clinical days in Topeka.

Q: And are they doing well?

A: Quite well. As a matter of fact, they sent in a proposal for a grant from AARP. I was on the committee, a trustee on this foundation. They got the grant, and it was a very good one.

Q: What were they interested in doing?

A: Trying to research so that they could dispel some of the myths about mentally ill people over sixty. That will really be a nice contribution.

Q: And how long a grant period would they have? This would require a lot of time to work on this.

A: No, it wasn't a longitudinal grant. If the research shows that further work should be done, then that is just passed on. It is a one-year grant of \$50,000. It has to be finished in that one year, unless, you know, you see at the end of nine months that you're going to have too much longer, then you ask for an extension and get it that way. Or, if you want you can get a demonstration grant. But I think to answer your question, KU should put more emphasis on publicizing those particular areas where they are strongest. Just as, I guess they don't have to advertise basketball, but they are strong in basketball.

Q: Yes they are.

A: But in football, they are not.

Q: It never really happened in football.

A: That is correct. Because when I went there, they used to play Wisconsin U, and Notre Dame, and we expected them to get walloped, and they did.

Q: I know that from what I've been reading in the student newspaper, this past year, and in the Lawrence Journal World that the administration at KU right now is very concerned about the fact that they have so few black faculty members and very -- who is in the upper administration? What should they do about recruiting faculty and quality black people who want to be chancellors and vice chancellors and so forth. What must they do to improve their record in that area? Salaries might help, right?

A: That would be number one, yes. That's the reason why they go to Harvard and some of those others, because the salaries there are phenomenal. You know, the size of a university has nothing to do with it at all, but I think there is a certain amount of prestige that goes with not just being associated with a university, but a community, too. Though as a Jayhawker they may want to ostracize you, I think Lawrence has that much to offer somebody, community wise. You see this is one of the underlying things.

Q: You're not finding the participation in the Chamber of Commerce, in the Rotary, and whatever is what you are saying. The civil service organizations. There isn't that mix that would help set a basis for attracting some others to the campus.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: So town and gown, in that connection, is a very important thing.

A: Oh yes. I think the activities and so forth at the university are

now participated in much more by Lawrence society and group than when I was here. I mean they were very discrete and separate. As a matter of fact at that time, a number of people told me those students ...

Q: They were a nuisance those students, and you didn't want to have anything to do with them, unless you had a boarding house.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: And could make some money by having the students rent rooms.

A: If you worked there at the university, I guess about the highest you could get would be overseeing the chemistry lab or something like that.

Q: You really weren't made a chairman of a department.

A: Oh heavens, no! That wasn't allowable. ???

Q: That seems to be a continual problem. They haven't worked that out yet.

A: Under our present chancellor, we are getting expansion in many, many areas. In recognizing individuals and the kinds of work that has been done, even in the past, which is, evoking the interest of many individuals. And the very fact that you have got a tremendous alumni following.

Q: Yes, they do. The Alumni Association is enormous. And you were honored by the Alumni Association.

A: That's right.

Q: Would you like to talk about your retirement, now? Have we covered enough of your career.? When it finally came about that you were going to have to retire, of course you were going to have to retire from several things. At the Veteran's Administration, for example, had you been teaching enough at the university that you had to go through the retirement process at KU as well? Had you reached an age where you had to retire?

A: Let's see, they had raised the age to age 70, because I did not retire at 65. And, well, I suppose there might have been a very good reason for that, because when they set up the position of Associate Chief of Staff, which training and education throughout the VA system, there were very few people who were qualified for that particular job. Since I was, since I had the background anyway, our directors thought we've got the person, and it would be a feather in our cap to be one of the first ones to have that slot filled. And consequently, this is why they pushed for me to take that. Because they said it meant that I would be going to Washington representing this hospital, because once or twice a quarter you were in Washington just for that reason. And so, you see, at the time, I was about 65 anyhow, and so all I did was just shift from Chief of Psychological Services to the Training and Education Program. I didn't even change hospitals.

Q: That's right, it was all done under the same roof.

A: Yes. And in a sense, I mean, if you said to me you were a student starting out from scratch anyhow, so this is what we do in here. He didn't even have a job description for it at that time. This is something that we actually evolved.

Q: He was able to say to you, Dr. Phelps, since you are going to be running this, how do you want to set this up, and you were pretty much able to do what you wanted to do with the students.

A: Staff-wise, too.

Q: What a wonderful position to be in, to be able to create your own division. That's quite a creative challenge.

A: Well, it was, because nobody knew where we were going. Of course, it had some stumbling blocks, too, you see, because it meant you had all the

education and training and control of the funds for the hospital. This means that all of the doctors who had excursions to various places for some such and such a kind of training had to come through that office.

Q: That was a very powerful position to be in.

A: There was some flak that came up, because it was my feeling that this should be equitably distributed, not just the top echelon needs to skim the cream off of this. There were some people here who had never been anywhere for training, and so we had a little ... Fortunately at that particular time, the director of the hospital for the first time in the history of the hospital was black.

Q: Oh my, so you had a kindred spirit.

A: Yes, that's right.

Q: The timing was perfect.

A: And he was a real bombastic kind of a guy. I mean he swore like a sailor! He'd do that at the drop of a hat, and let me tell you I've never seen a hospital to where you could eat off the floor anywhere. It was like this under his direction. He was all over the hospital, all the time! He never was in his office. He was a leader who was out there in front of the parade.

Q: Now what has become of him? He's not still there is he?

A: He is retired ... no what they do is they move their directors around. He left here and went to the East coast; I'm not sure exactly where. He said he wanted to work his way back East, because that is where he wanted to retire. His wife died while he was here.

Q: So just like the bishops and the priests, he moved around.

A: Well, they had a program ... it was unwritten ... but it was that

you stay at a VA hospital for five years and then you get moved. When I came along that was still the policy, but I refused to move. Because they were going to move me to Alabama, and my children were small and I said, I don't want them down there in that educational system. They were accustomed to the local schools here. So if you don't move when they want you to move then they forget you. And you just stay where you are.

Q: But you're not the kind of person they could forget easily. Now when you actually retired, did you notice much of a difference in your work life, because you still, I imagine, you still had your private practice.

A: I still had my practice.

Q: And you still had a group of people working in your own office.

A: Yes, I had two offices.

Q: Oh you had two offices. All this time you had two offices?

A: Yes, one at Ward Parkway Shopping Center, and one at 12th and Grand.

Q: And you had how many people; how many people were you staffing?

A: Well let's see at the time when I closed the office?

Q: Well, when you retired.

A: Well when I retired I had to seven, because there were three at Ward Parkway, and four at the other.

Q: So you had two offices that you were running. What else was going on at the time you retired in 1978, ten years ago.

A: I was doing a Life enrichment program twice a week and I still did the orientation of the volunteers for the Hospital Volisys here.

Q: Oh. Now did they expect you to do that as a volunteer, or were you paid to do that?

A: That was volunteer.

Q: So you were shifting then a little.

A: Well, the Shepard Center work was volunteer as well.

Q: That's right. So you had volunteer work that carried over and new volunteer work that came in and you still had your professional ties because you were still running your home offices. How long did you maintain your professional offices? How much longer did that go on?

A: Let's see that went on until 1980, I guess.

Q: For another couple of years.

A: Yes.

Q: Then did it make a transition by someone buying your business out, or did the staff become partners and take it over or how did that happen?

A: Yes. What I did was, for those individuals who worked in the downtown office, actually needed to find space so they could continue what they were doing, and some of the patients that I had were still continued on, although I was not taking any new ones. I shifted over the new ones to the others.

Q: So you were easing your load and responsibilities as well.

A: Yes. And at the Ward Parkway office my partner there just took over. She is still running the practice. It's not at Ward Parkway anymore, but one of my students who came to Ward Parkway, he is still practicing.

Q: Do you know his name?

A: His name is David Salva. He still works over here.

Q: At the VA hospital?

A: Yes.

Q: And the woman who was your partner at Ward Parkway, what is her

name?

A: Lucille Liebert. She took over that location for the testing.

Q: Did you find there were any surprises in store for you as you retired, or were you well prepared?

A: I think the biggest surprise for me was to get adjusted to the payment schedule. I was accustomed to being paid every two weeks, and consequently the way I entered my bills and so forth there were certain routines I had. Now I only get paid once a month.

Q: And so all those bills still come due after the fifteenth and are due right around the first.

A: This probably was the main thing that was an adjustment for me. The other was that you have to be more aware of budgetary things.

Q: Like what?

A: Well, for example, let's say I decided that I want to go to Tampa, Florida. When I had the practice, if I had a good month, I'd go to Tampa, Florida.

Q: The money was there.

A: Yes. So now when you are on a fixed income, you know you have voluntary work and hobbies, and so forth, but there is no increase in income. So consequently, there are always the unexpected things that come up, so you have to at least keep enough of a cushion so that that just doesn't devastate you.

Q: Well I think my husband and I are finding we are in that position right now. We didn't have to wait for retirement to have that happen to us. Now what effect did your retirement have on your wife?

A: Well, I imagine there were many, many things that we do together

now that we never did. For example, I can't ever remember going grocery shopping since I left Topeka.

Q: Oh. And that was a long time ago.

A: Now I go shopping with her when she goes for a suit or a dress, or whenever I want to buy something. We see a sale or something like that. And of course I guess the other thing is the things around the house, particularly the yard work. I take care of it, all the shrubbery and so forth. She takes care of the flowers, though.

Q: Now had you had time to do that before you retired?

A: No, I hadn't. We had lawn service that used to cut the yard and so forth. And it got to the point where we had a pretty good looking yard in the spring, since they cut so many different yards, they had a lot of crabgrass. You could see right where the wheels of the mower would sow it right down.

Q: Seeds that had caught in the tire treads ...

A: And so, we decided that we'd have ChemLawn to do the fertilizing and the weed control, but I would cut it and water it. And now there are a lot of things that I have as my responsibility that still need to be done. There's always something that I need to do. So there is a certain amount of involvement now.

Q: So what happened after the girls left?

A: I would be home for, because I never ate breakfast, I would be home for dinner, but God knows what time.

Q: I'll bet that wasn't appreciated here much. A little hard to ... well, I suppose she could fix something and set it aside and then put it in the microwave. But ...

A: Let's see, I was usually at the hospital, then I would go straight to the office, and from the office I would get home for the ten o'clock news, just about. Then if I had to give a talk or something, I usually could get home any time after twelve. I had retired, so I did could accept special days at the office. Usually the day I would come in all day would be on Saturday. I would spend full time at the office. That meant that then didn't have to go in the evenings. But when the life enrichment group decided that they wanted to go to Rumania to see how they treated their elderly, because we had read about this...

Q: Oh, how do Rumanians treat their elderly?

A: Very, very well. They are cared for in a way like you wouldn't believe.

Q: So it is more like the time when it was the wisdom of your society was vested in the elders, and that's the way they are treated?

A: They were looked upon as individuals who everybody else has a responsibility for their health, including the state, because they've got clinics, spas that have been set up which are open to all of their constituents, you see.

Q: What age do you have to achieve before you are considered one of the elders?

A: Actually you aren't, because they have that same kind of attitude toward the little ones.

Q: Well, there's an enlightened society.

A: But they are behind the Iron Curtain! So there are drawbacks.

Q: So you took a tour to Rumania?

A: The whole group went.

Q: So how many people were there.

A: Now let's see, I think there were 23 or 25 of us.

Q: When did you go?

A: 1980, I guess it was.

Q: Did you write to the Rumanian government and say who you were and that you would like to ...

A: Yes and they sent over here doctors from Rumania and we had three different sessions with them to tell us how to act and so forth, because you know Americans. They told us various things to expect. Of course there were still some things that they left out. I thought the first day we were going to bring all of them back.

Q: Why, what happened?

A: We stayed at a spa. First we went to New York, and that's where the Rumanian Embassy met us and we flew over on Czechoslovakian Airlines. We chose Czechoslovakian Airlines because of the fringe benefits.

Q: What did they offer that no one else offered?

A: They offered us three days and nights in Prague, hotel, everything with tours and all of this for free.

Q: Free! And that is a gorgeous city. I have seen the pictures. I would love to go there myself. I just love the pictures. I know they have theatre. Did you have a chance to go to the theatre or music or whatever?

A: No. We did not in those three days. We did all the tours. All the historical spots where the bombs had ruined the city. And they've done nothing about it.

Q: Oh it stands ...

A: Just as it was. They've restored a number of things though.

Q: They are not going to let anybody forget.

A: Yes. Well, we changed in Prague and flew to Bucharest and we stayed all night in Bucharest at a hotel which you wouldn't have noticed as being any different than a hotel here, you see. We weren't prepared and we got up and took a small plane to a spa where we were going to stay, a Herculianian spa. There was a statue of Hercules there. But it was a delightful spot. It was within the mountains and it was lovely. The means of transportation were your two feet. And you stayed in the spa and they had everything lined up from the time we got up in the morning until you went to bed at night. The first thing you had to do was after you had breakfast that first day, you had a physical exam. Everybody.

Q: Everybody in your tour?

A: Everybody. Breakfast was the thing. We got up and got down to breakfast and in the spa they had the American table, they had the German table, they had the Jewish table, because people come from all over the world.

Q: It was really a health enhancer ...

A: Yes.

Q: And people who did not feel too well would go and ...

A: Most of those people were feeling pretty good. If you were unfirm or anything like that, that's not the place for you. You had to do a lot of climbing and walking. But we got down to breakfast and we assumed that everybody has breakfast the way we do.

Q: Ah, but that's not so.

A: Well you know cereal and orange juice and toast and bacon and eggs. When we got down there, there was a cup of yogurt ...

Q: This was the American breakfast?

A: A wedge of green cheese, a thick slice of brown bread and a green onion.

Q: Oh that's wild.

A: They were too! We couldn't eat this.

Q: Did you have any hearty souls who tried to eat the food?

A: Oh some did. And of course the big protest was launched. But they were very, very gracious about it. The only time we had anything to say about the meals -- because the rest of the meals, I mean, they were like they were feeding a harvest hand or something. At lunch there was soup first. And it wasn't a cup of soup, it was a bowl of soup and there was chicken soup with a thigh, a leg or a breast in it! And then came the main course, including dessert.

Q: Oh my, I'd love that.

A: One thing they don't have is salads.

Q: No salads?

A: No. And no citrus fruits.

Q: Oh that's a shame. They aren't able to grow those?

A: That's right. If they get any, it comes from Israel or Greece.

Q: And it would be terribly expensive.

A: Very. Of course apple orchards were just abound. I mean they just had acre after acre after acre of that. It belongs to the state you know. They are really noted for apples. They just had acre after acre after acre.

Q: What would you say the major revelation was, what you observed and how you were treated?

A: I think they had been taught themselves, in terms of their own health care. From this size up it is taught that this is their life-style.

Q: So you don't have to worry about junk food. That probably doesn't exist, does it?

A: That's right.

Q: And you don't have all this fatty food, and candy to tempt you.

A: They have beer.

Q: But that can be healthful. One bottle of beer a day is good for your heart, your cardiovascular system.

A: They drink beer right out in front of the church! People come and bring the whole family. The whole family is there, and when the bell rings they all go in to church! They do it as a family. And when they go out, there have their certain plot of ground, you know. Father, mother, the kids, grandparents are all out there. They get up in the morning; I don't know what time they get up. They were always up when I was up. You'd see most of them coming for one of the clinics. Even if they didn't swim, they were in the pool and then they had the hot waters, and the cold waters and then the massage. This was every day. And we did the same thing.

Q: Did you find it was refreshing?

A: We didn't go to their clinics. That was state controlled. But the one in the spa, we couldn't take anybody with us. One fellow who lived up in the last house in our block, and he and his wife went with us. He said one morning, "I'm going to sleep in this morning." And he did. That night at dinner the spa agent came down with a pad and he said, "Why weren't you in the pool this morning?"

Q: I bet he never did that again.

A: That's right. But you see here when we had to take the physical, we'd go into the hospital and you're in there two or three days and you come out, you got a complete physical. But in Rumania you got your chest xray here, and then you got your blood seriology maybe two miles from there. So you know how you got there?

Q: You walked.

A: So if you had five, six different tests to get, you walked to every one of those sites.

Q: So with the stamina you needed to get through the whole process meant you were probably in pretty good health.

A: Every day you were observed.

Q: Did they check all this everyday?

A: No, but every day you had a certain walk ...

Q: That was required.

A: Required. And they had a place about two miles from the spa, a very scenic little pathway, a tumbling brook splashing down. It was put there. It was rather high. Of course we were rather high up anyway. Therefore, you had fifteen minutes of breathing exercises at this place.

Q: Now, did you discover that the elderly people in Rumania lived to a healthy, ripe old age. And that really you can attribute it to this life-style that they lead from childhood on.

A: Yes. There was something else though. Boy do they drink a lot from various springs that come down from the mountain. And they have got them all named. One is supposed to be for something. For example, my wife was having trouble with her eyes. They told her to bathe her eyes in the Diana Spring. The Diana Spring was at least three miles from where we were.

So twice a day we went to Diana Spring. Those women, 65 years old, would meet in the afternoon and work that fine needlework that they are so gifted in. And none of them were wearing glasses.

Q: None? Wow.

A: None. You could pick out a foreigner among them.

Q: The foreigners would be wearing glasses. It wasn't contact lenses, they just had good, strong vision.

A: That's right. It was really helpful. When I got back from there, I could walk anywhere. Upstairs, downstairs, it didn't matter.

Q: Have you kept up with some of the things that you did and learned, or have you fallen back on your bad habits.

A: No, not completely. I don't walk as much as I did there, that is certain, but I still try to do some type of exercise every single day, every day. It might not be a lot, at the most ten minutes every day.

Q: What do you do?

A: It's the consistency. Keeping up with isometrics. Keeping your flexibility. Toning your muscles.

Q: That's a Phog Allen exercise.

A: Well these things, and then they were very much into vitamins. The doctor gave me a regular diet to follow. I still pretty much follow it. For breakfast I have: a slice of toast, two spoons of cottage cheese, and a glass of milk. That's breakfast.

Q: So they got you eating breakfast, which is good. It is probably a good time in your life. I bet you make time for breakfast. Instead of yogurt, you have cottage cheese.

A: Because one thing they don't have is hard liquor, they drink beer,

but there is no hard liquor at all.

Q: Wines? Do they drink wines?

A: I don't know whether they do or not.

Q: Ciders maybe, the hard cider.

A: Well, I got out of the habit of that. You could call me a tea totaler now. I haven't had any since then. Once in a while on these hot days I have a glass of beer. But the group wants to go back!

Q: Well, I was wondering about that. I'm going to look when I read my AARP Magazine and see if somehow you have gotten someone to include a tour to Rumania, because it sounds like a wonderful idea. Do you think you'll go back?

A: I don't know. You see that group tried to get together several times, and have had all kinds of difficulties. I suppose we would have gone back had I completed my tour of duty at Shepherds Center. Because you see when I came back from there, that was when I got elected to the Board of AARP. And that's when the private offices got closed. And I had to bow out of the center.

Q: You really had to prioritize your time.

A: That's right. Well, I attempted to have one class at the center, but it got to be sort of sporadic. You see because what they will do is they will do is they'll say, if you're going to Detroit, well while you are in Detroit you might just drop by Cleveland and Cincinnati, and I would have what would be a three-day trip expanded into seven days.

Q: Now is this part of the AARP budget? I mean they send their board members to various locations. Are you expected to fund these trips?

A: Oh no. Everyone had an expense account. So you see they keep my

calendar in Washington. They know what the dates are since they pay the travel and the expenses that you incur while you are there. In many instances the people there are so glad to see you that you get the red carpet rolled out anyhow.

Q: Yes, so you are wined and dined and they put you up. Well, then are you normally giving speeches now, or conducting seminars, or what all do they have you do?

A: Right now, since I am on the board, what I do pretty much is to give talks. I primarily go to 25th anniversaries or the installation of officers at some one of the chapters. While visiting we got called from three chapters in southern Kansas who said they had never had a national board member there. So they wanted us to come down and they really had a grand festive time.

Q: Now do several of you travel together to these, or is this individual?

A: Individual. If we are going to something like a talk on crime prevention, then maybe a staff person will go and they will often send one or two of us from the board. Otherwise we just travel individually.

Q: So you've really been able, in a way, to continue your professional expertise in this wonderful outreach through the AARP.

A: This is where I think a background in psychology has really been a real boon to me, particularly in handling the board members!

Q: What do you have to do in handling the board members?

A: Each member has their private interest, and they would like to see much more time devoted by AARP to, let's say, the work equity program.

That's their ...

Q: That's what they're committed to. So you have a certain person pulling in that direction.

A: Oh yes.

Q: And then somebody else has decided that his pet project is really something else.

A: Oh yes. And it is the same way when we give out funds for certain kinds of research, let's say some money was to go to North Carolina. Well, North Carolina University would be the obvious place. Well, someone would argue, "No, no, they've had more than their share. You should give it to Washington State."

Q: Or, "Kansas has never received an award. We must find someone in Kansas who would like to do some work." Who is eligible to apply. Do you have to be an organization or a school or a research facility? Or can you be an individual?

A: Anybody can apply, but it has to come through a college or a university. Because unless the dean approval is given and your principal researcher is on the faculty, then it is not even considered.

Q: Has KU applied for any grants, by the way?

A: KU has, Kansas State has, and St. Mary's College just got one last year. I've been trying to get them to send in one ever since I've been on the board. They never would, but they finally said yes. And it was a superlative one too. It is really going to fill a gap in ...

Q: What are they studying?

A: You know the measurement of intelligence by any qualified individual at the present time uses the Wechsler Adult Intelligence Scale. And that is universally used, okay? But it goes up to about age sixty.

There is no kind of measurement after that. It is as if at sixty, you lose all your intelligence.

Q: You plateau out, so it doesn't matter anyway.

A: They don't say you plateau out, they say you bomb! Their proposal is to extend the range of the Wechsler to the seventies, and they are going to do it by empirically doing this with individuals in these age groups to set up a standard. So in a sense I think this is going to be something that is universally used everywhere.

Q: Now is this considered one of the one-year grants or this a three-year grant?

A: This is a one-year grant.

Q: That's a lot for them to do in one year.

A: It takes a lot of people to do it. There are already quite a large number of people involved in it. It is done in cooperation with the Veteran's Administration Hospital at Leavenworth where you have a captive audience, you know. They have an 800-bed domiciliary ward. These are individuals who are mobile and up and everything they want to do they can do, but they just need a place to stay.

Q: There was one more question I had. In 1991, you said that is going to be the year ...

A: The White House Conference on Aging.

Q: That will take place over what length of period of time, and it will be held in Washington, DC? When will that happen? What time of year and will it be a week of activities or a year of activities?

A: The White House Conference on Aging ... when was the first one held, it was held in 1960? I think there have been three: 1960, 1970,

1980. This will be the fourth one. The first one was had the experts on aging and so forth, and they come up with all kinds of resolutions and so forth. But they didn't have anybody over sixty there!

Q: They neglected to have people in that age group!

A: That's right. So they decided to change that in the 1970 conference. They attempted to rectify that. But then what you did was you got Congress involved, and they tried to make it almost a political thing, because they wanted somebody there from each one of their states and something like this. So that didn't really pan out too well. The one in 1980 turned out with some very, very good prospects or projects for the kinds of things we should be looking at. Except that they were apropos at the time, but there have been so many shifts and changes since then. For example, one of the focuses in the 1980 conference was retirement and a retirement age. Now there isn't any retirement age! You've got to do something else for 1991. It means that when we are projecting the future, we are going to have to be really involved with something, because we are going to be beyond where we are at the present time. And that is one of the reasons why AARP feels as though they are going to have to have a major part in that to set up that initiative for new roles in society. They are working on that right at the present time.

Q: So they will really be ready in 1991. And how are you going to be involved; do you know yet?

A: I imagine a good bit of my time will be spent on attempting to continue to evolve the life enrichment program and to get back to where it is pretty much functioning all over. It is in 55 different cities now.

Q: Did it originate here?

A: Here, in Kansas City. This is where they come for their training to get set up.

Q: So that was something else that you were really instrumental in starting up and promoting.

A: I was involved in the planning stages of that from the very beginning.

Q: That's exciting.

A: It is.

Q: Is there any way you could choose one particular that you have accomplished that stands out in your mind, that you are happy about, that really stands out in your mind? A contribution that you have made, that you are very proud of?

A: Yes. Two daughters.

Q: And they are beautiful.

A: Well, we really are proud of them.

Q: Now the younger one is the one who is a nun? Is she heading up a college?

A: She is the Dean of Students.

Q: Dean of Students. I knew she had an important position, one of responsibility.

A: She is in administration. Well she was ??? administrators of colleges from all over last week.

Q: And the daughter in Madison, is she involved in various kinds of activities beyond her career? Now she is raising children too?

A: So she's involved in everything. They are involved in music, ballet, swimming, you name it -- Girl Scouts, Boy Scouts. She's involved

with everything.

Q: Well Madison, Wisconsin is a wonderful place to bring up children. I was brought up there. I am very fond of Madison. I've lived in quite a few other cities -- Seattle, Washington; New Orleans, Louisiana; Haddisburg, Baton Rouge -- there just isn't quite anyplace else like Madison, Wisconsin. Madison is very special. I was think I was lucky to grow up there. I am sure your daughter agrees.

A: There is only one place that I would go if I just had a choice to make, if you could take the weather away, and that would be Alaska.

Q: Really, why Alaska?

A: For raising children. I'm talking about one particular city ...

Q: Anchorage?

A: Not Anchorage.

Q: Juncan?

A: No, no. It was the first one we went to, Fairbanks, when I visited Alaska. The thing that struck me was the elementary school children's high interest like this with projects for the science fair, and computers. But you see that is something you'd have to be exposed to. What really gets you is for them to come up and say, "Good day, welcome to our school," just as much as any adult ...

Q: And wanting to make you feel at home.

A: But you see they have wonderful things that they require. Parents will send their children to school. Parents have to spend at least two days a month there -- the parents!

Q: As volunteers?

A: Yes. One thing that they stress more than anything else is

reading. You have reading classes twice a day. They are not taught by the same person. From the principal on down.

Q: Everyone is teaching?

A: Everybody.

Q: That is amazing. I will pass some of this information along to my husband, who is a principal of a school. I think he'd be very interested. Well Dr. Phelps, I want to thank you for sharing all these various and many remembrances with us. It was my great pleasure to interview you.

A: Thank you.

Q: If there are any things that occur to you after I have left, that we may have either brushed on or didn't quite get to, you will be receiving a typed transcript of this taped interview, so that you are perfectly free to edit it any way you wish. What if I leave and fifteen minutes later you realize it is such and such Alaska, or I really should have said something about the curriculum at that particular point, or I forgot to mention some of the students who came out of a particular class at KU. It is perfectly fine to add the things that you think are relevant.

A: Academically, the only thing that I recall that I really felt rather good about is the fact that I've been on the thesis committee of ten different people who are now working in the profession. That's something that gives you a nice feeling.

Q: And I am sure they are doing well and doing all this research that will add to the profession and leadership. As you think of those ten people, you may want to say something about them, and where they are today. That might be a very good addition to the transcript. These were ten theses that you advised, I think that would be good for you to add that. Thank you

so much.