University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives

World War II at Illinois Oral History Project

Interviewee: Dan Perrino

Interviewer: Chris D'Arpa

Length: 01:16:49

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Chris D'Arpa: Alright, I'm gonna put this closer to you than to me. And put this one a little bit closer to you than to me. I use two because I have had failures and it's kind of unnverving to get back and realize nothing worked.

Dan Perrino: Sure.

CD: So we have a backup. Let me start by saying this is Chris D'Arpa. It's May 5, 2009, and I'm here talking with Dan Perrino for the World War II Oral History Project, Illinois on the Home Front.

And I believe that I did not bring the consent form, so let me just say I did send them to you previously, and I think you've seen them with the other projects, so you know the terms of this.

And I just want to get on tape that, or digital.

DP: Sure.

CD: That this is a project that you've consented, that interview [Dan: Right] you've consented to, and I will get the form to you. You know, I'll put the form in the mail to you, and if you can return it to us.

The way I like to start these interviews is to have you tell me a little bit about your background, your family, where you grew up, and you know, what kinds of work, what kind of work you did as a kid, where you went to school, brothers and sisters.

DP: [?]

CD: Yeah.

DP: It'll take the whole—

CD: Well, yes. [Laughter.]

DP: Well, I grew up in Chicago and born on April 15th, Tax Day, 1921. And that makes me 88 today. And my parents both were immigrants coming from Italy, my mother from Sicily and my father from Bari. And he came here when he was 10 in 1894 with a tag around his neck.

He was met at Ellis Island by a friend of his brother, older brother, who was working on the railroad and could not get off to meet his younger brother. As did happen in those early days of immigrants coming here, that's what the older members of the family brought the young ones over and so forth. But my father started out working in the railroad at Leeds, South Dakota at 10 years old as a water boy at 25 cents a week.

CD: how did he get from New York to South Dakota?

DP: Well, his friend, his older brother's friend, met him in New York. He happened to be in New York and he also worked on the railroad. And he took my father on the railroad to Leeds, South Dakota, where the gang was working, laying track. And they laid track all the way to Chicago and over a period of years, of course.

And while he was working, one of the other people that worked in the gang was also from Italy and had a sister in Sicily. And he kept talking about his family and his sister. And so my father, who never went to school a day in his life, was self-taught, wrote a very — must have been a very awkward letter in later years to this person's sister, and they communicated. However, they communicated in those days very infrequently, I would imagine. And when he got enough money, they became apparently enamored with one another through 10 years or 11 years or 12 years of letters. He said, "If I've saved enough money, and I'll send you money for tickets to come to this country, and you can live with your brother in Chicago." That's where they lived. "And if we like one another, after a year, we'll get married." And that's what happened.

CD: Wow.

DP: She came in 1917.

CD: But your father was 10 when he came to this country.

DP: Yeah, all by himself. He's a self-made man, and he was a bricklayer during the Depression. He worked hard for his family, built his own home. It ended up being a bricklayer and built his own two-story apartment. And always, as long as I can remember, always talked about the value of education.

And he also liked music. And of course, being from Italy, they liked opera. And when I was six years old, I went to my first opera at the old auditorium and then got involved with music. And I learned to play saxophone and clarinet and played in a dance band and made good money. At one time, I made more money than my father.

And he just almost insisted that I go off to university. That would be the biggest thing in his life. So if I didn't go to university, it would have broken his heart. So I came to the university in 1940.

CD: Let me go back.

DP: Yeah, this is true.

CD: Let me go back to a little more about your parents. Where was the house that he built?

DP: It's still there. The address is 3957 West 49th Street, Archer and Pulaski. Do you know Chicago?

CD: Sure.

DP: You know where Pulaski and Archer is?

CD: Oh yeah.

DP: Just in that little corner. And, you know, Archer is this way.

CD: It's a diagonal.

DP: Pulaski is here, 49th was here, and we were right there. Now, you can hardly see the house from the street, but it's a two-story apartment building. And we rented out the second floor. But he made his own wine. He had a wine cellar.

CD: So did you have a garden?

DP: Oh, gosh, a big garden. Huge garden, yeah. And during the war, he had a victory garden. The victory garden would be almost an acre, I would say. And they gave the vegetables to whoever you give vegetables in those days.

But I had two sisters and they both, one passed away at 17 years old, had pleurisy and pneumonia, and the other one died when she was a baby.

CD: Oh my gosh.

DP: So for all practical purposes, I was a spoiled only child. But they were really very supportive family of parents that supported the fact that I was playing in a dance orchestra, played nightclubs and so forth. And then when I came to the university, they were as proud as punch, of course. And the campus at that time was about 11,700, I think. A little less than 12,000.

CD: Let me step back one more, one more, because there are a couple more things I'd like to ask about. One, what were your parents' names?

DP: My father's name was Dominic, and my mother's name was Pietrina.

CD: And what was your mother's maiden name?

DP: Di Vincenzo, yeah.

CD: Okay. And where in Sicily was she from?

DP: Just south of Palermo.

CD: Okay… Okay, so we were talking about your—

DP: Yeah, my mother was from south of Palermo. I don't remember the name of a smaller town, and my father was from Bari.

CD: Okay, so we have that. And where did you go to high school?

DP: I went to Kelly High School, which was one of the smaller high schools. At that time, there were 42 high schools in Chicago. And then I transferred after my first year to Tilton, which is an all-boys school, 6,600 boys, right by the stockyards. And I stayed there for two years, then I went back to my first high school and graduated from Kelly.

CD: Interesting. And were you studying music in high school?

DP: I was in the band and orchestra, yeah. And I was taking private lessons as much as my father could. I studied at the Hull House. Yeah, you know where that is.

CD: Oh, sure. So how would you get down to—

DP: Streetcar, three cents. Yeah.

CD: Okay, and how often would you go down there?

DP: For lessons?

CD: For lessons.

DP: Oh, once a week or once every two weeks, yeah.

CD: And where were the clubs that you played in, were they?

DP: Oh, in Chicago. Oh, they were on Rush Street, south side of Chicago. Ballrooms like the Aragon and Trianon and the Melody Mill and the Paradise Ballrooms, the Palladium Ballroom, and then regional ballrooms like recreation centers, big church recreation centers/ A big one for dancing, ballroom dancing was on the south side of Chicago, a place called St. Agnes. And it was a big Catholic recreation center with bowling and a bunch of things. And on Friday and Saturday, Wednesday, Friday, and Saturday, they'd have dancing.

CD: So how old were you when you were playing out in clubs like this?

DP: Well, I started playing when I was 13. My first job was playing at a tavern on New Year's Eve. I played from 9:30 to 5:30 in the morning with a three-piece group, accordion, drums, and myself on the saxophone. My father sat with me the whole time.

CD: Were your fellow bandmates equally young?

DP: No, they were old. They were all adults, yeah. And I made three dollars.

CD: How did you find these bands to play with?

DP: Well, a lot of it had to do with the fact that at that time there weren't too many people playing instruments. And people knew in the neighborhood that I was playing. And I played at church things, and somebody heard me play at a church event apparently and asked if I would play this. And it was the accordion player that asked me. He was, oh, he might have been 35 years old or something like that. And I could read music pretty well in those days. And so I would take the sheet music and read from the sheet music. So I made a lot of mistakes.

CD: It happens. That's how we learn.

DP: Yeah.

CD: All right. So life in Chicago. At what point did you decide to apply to university and which ones did you apply to?

DP: Well, I went to University of Chicago, mainly because it had an arrangement with Chicago Musical College that I could take music courses and musical college. But I didn't know much about universities in those days. And the University of Chicago was almost more conservatory than it was kind of a broad-based educational background. And one day, one of the classmates said, "Would you like to go to Orchestra Hall to hear the U of I concert band?" And I'd heard vaguely that the U of I, that's when Dr. Harding had it. And this is in 1940, the spring of 1940.

And I had no, the band that I played in, in Chicago, was just a band. It was okay, but it was like an advanced high school band. But when I heard the U of I band play in Orchestra Hall, I was just astounded by how, first of all, how beautifully they played the sound and the dignity that it had, which, interestingly enough, we don't have today. And so I applied. And at that time, the university didn't have any restrictions for people coming in, so I got in very easily. I wasn't particularly the greatest student in the world. And go started here playing in the band.

CD: So let me just clarify, you did go to the University of Chicago for a while?

DP: One semester.

CD: One semester, okay. And the music conservatory was, do you remember?

DP: Chicago Musical College, and it was downtown in Chicago, on Jackson Boulevard. I think today, I think it probably evolved into Roosevelt University. It might have been in that same building, yeah.

CD: Okay, so you applied, you got into the University of Illinois. Were you still living at home with your folks?

DP: Oh, yes, yeah.

CD: And how did your folks react when you—

DP: Well, they were proud of me going, yeah.

CD: Do you remember how you got down here?

DP: By car, and how do we get down here? I guess I drove, and maybe my father was learning to drive. He didn't drive, so he bought a car, a used car, first car was a 1931 Chevy. We paid $150 for it. And I think our second car was a used car, a 1937 Chevy. And I needed it because I was playing dance jobs. And I think I drove down, and maybe my father drove back. I don't know.

CD: So it would have been fall 1940, is that?

DP: Oh, yes, yeah. It may have been. I had a friend that drove with him. You know, that's something. You know what I do remember, of all things? I remember driving into Urbana, and I remember the buildings on Main Street, and I remember the sign that said 14,000, you know/

CD: The population sign?

DP: Urbana, yeah.

CD: Huh, 14,000.

DP: But one of these days, I'm going to check to see if that was reality, that it was just 14,000 in 1940, but I remember that. And I think Champaign was like 20 or 25,000.

CD: Tiny.

DP: And the university was like, I suspect, like any other university towns. You know, there were places like on the corner of Sixth and Green, there's a place called Prens on Green. And then on Oregon and Goodwin, right in the corner, that's called Prens on Oregon. And those were campus hangouts. But for the musicians, they were places where you could get "bean jobs." Means you could play for your meals. And you could play from like four, five to 7:00 as kids were eating. And this would be kind of a drugstore, kind of an all-purpose drugstore. And there was O'Hanley's on Green Street right by the drugstore. I don't know what's there any longer, but right on the just east or south of Green Street on Wright Street. There was a strip of buildings there that had a university photo lab, a drugstore, a Handley's campus bar, and a good place for dating and so forth.

CD: So let me ask you, had you been to Champaign-Urbana before?

DP: No.

CD: You just came on the basis of that band concert?

DP: Right, yeah.

CD: And what kind of orientation did you have to campus? Did you know where you would be living?

DP: Well, you know, that is a little bit vague, but I lived in College Hall, which is right on Fourth and Green. And that was almost the university, took the place of the university union building

because union building, they had dancing there and a lot of socializing, and they had room for a hundred men, and they were mostly engineers and chem majors, and people went to school on that side of the campus. And the rent was ten dollars a month, rent. And I lived there one year, and then through the ROTC program, and I heard there's three of them. My eyes are bad. I think this was my roommate. He was six feet four. His father was superintendent from Havana, Illinois and he was a freshman like me. And they had another two sons and a daughter to educate. So they decided that it would be cheaper if they would buy a house here so that the kids could live there and then rent out. And so they took in with their sons, they took in a total of 10 boys. So I had probably one of the best living situations, $10 a month. Nd then I had a meal job, right at the Granada Club, which was on 4th and Chalmers.

CD: Okay.

DP: And it's now the Police Institute, I think.

CD: What would it have been, the Grenada?

DP: A private men's dormitory. Yeah, and it be just like a—

CD: But it was called a club.

DP: Yeah, Granada Club. And it was a good, independent, probably the best independent men's dormitory. And you could eat your meals there. And I had my meal jobs there, and so I just walked a block. And it was just, I never thought, I thought that it was the best of all worlds.

And I should tell you that my father kept good accounting of my expenses. And my first-year expenses for tuition and books and so forth was a little over $360.

CD: Wow, that's great.

DP: Tuition was only $35.

CD: Things have changed.

DP: Very much so.

CD: So that house, what was this fellow's name? The fellow whose—

DP: Van Dyke.

CD: Van Dyke.

DP: Van Dyke. He passed away. His brother and sister are the only ones alive. And his brother, Wayne Van Dyke, lives up in Waukegan or Gurnee. And I think his sister lives out east somewhere. But yeah, we facetiously called our housing unit TNK, Tap a New Keg. And we get together about every three or four years and there are only just a few of us left, but my roommate passed away. Oh, a number of the others, but the guy here, that's Bob Johnson. He was an admissions officer at the University of Georgia, at Douglas, Georgia. And so I just talked with

him last week. And we were in the Pacific. Well, all of us were in the Pacific together. Didn't know it until we met at the replacement depot to come home. Yeah, so.

CD: Well, let me. I, you know, I tried to keep track of all this by staying linear but the house that you lived in then that they bought it, it's not around anymore. Well.

DP: You know what's there? Bromley Hall. Oh, and same address. 910 South Third.

CD: Oh, that's true. Yeah.

DP: And Mrs. Van Dyke sold it to the owner of Bromley Hall, so yeah.

CD: So did you live there for four years, or?

DP: Well, when we left, the reason that Van asked me if I'd want to live with him, and so the fall of 1941, we lived on Arbor Street. That's when they first owned the house. And then they lived there for one year, then they moved to the 910 address. What was your question now?

CD: Just if you lived there for four years.

DP: But after the second house, I lived there until I left in early '43, and then I came back in late '46, early '47 and went all the way through 1948 when we got married.

CD: Oh, terrific.

DP: Yeah, so it was a good place. We had really close ties to everybody.

CD: Oh, that's great. So tell me what, you know, life was like on campus when you came. What kinds of classes did you take?

DP: Well, I was in music and I wanted to be a, I wanted to play in a symphony orchestra or play jazz music or something like that. I wanted to play my instrument. I didn't have any real interest in teaching at that time, and I wasn't a particularly good student. And there were several reasons for that. One was that I just wasn't really quite sure what I wanted to do. And then the other thing was that the war was looming. And I need to tell you that when I started to register for classes that first year.

CD: In fall 1940?

DP: Yes. My roommate— I need to get a drink. [Crosstalk.] But my roommate was, you can't hear me now, can you?

CD: Probably not. We'll just take a break.

DP: My roommate was the first roommate before Van. I met Van through the ROTC and we weren't rooming together. My roommate was a guy by the name of Johnny Dankiewicz who lived in Chicago, and he was a junior. And he kind of guided me to come in here. I forgot about that. Yeah, Johnny Dankiewicz, right. And as we talked, he said, at that time, this being a land-

grant college, all male students had to take ROTC for two years. And that gave us a pretty large, we had a cadet corps of close to 6,000 students, yeah. And we used to have our parades out by Fourth and Gregory, you know, where the residence hall, that used to be our big parade ground. And also they'd play polo out there.

CD: Polo with horses?

DP: Yes, oh yeah, I was in the horse artillery. I need to tell you that story. But anyway, so John said, he said, you know, "I don't like the ROTC." He said, "I don't like the military." He said, "But you need to think about his." He said, "War is looming." He said, "I think we're going to be in a war." Most everybody thought that too. He said, "I think you might want to consider going to the ROTC and working towards getting into the Advance Corps." That meant that you had to declare yourself to be in the military because you were going to become an officer when you got in the Advance Corps. And so I did.

And when I signed up, when I went over to the registration, registration isn't like it is today. You'd be over to— was it the library? I think maybe the library.

CD: Really?

DP: I can remember those long tables up there.

CD: So in the reading room at the library?

DP: Yeah.

CD: Interesting. I think you're right. I think I've seen photographs of it.

DP: And we had each individual cards that, you know, if you held it up, would go from here down to the floor. And you had to write your name and your religious preference.

CD: Really?

DP: Oh yeah, all over and over and over again, every card. So when I got to the ROTC, I said, "I'd like to go," and I asked Johnny, "What group do you think I should be in?" He said, "I know some guys who are in the cavalry and they really like it. And so I said, "I'd like to get in the cav." I've never been on a horse. And he said, "The cavalry is closed." He said, "It's very popular." And he said, "But if you like to ride horses, you maybe want to get in the horse artillery. And I said, "Okay."

So I got in the horse artillery and I learned to ride. And I became an advanced rider and could jump. They got some beautiful horses. One of the things that we enjoyed is that when you got to be in the advanced equitation class, you could check out a horse or a pack horse to go on a camp out. So we used to go up to Kickapoo with them [?] the side roads.

CD: You'd ride all the way over to Kickapoo?

DP: Oh yes, take our time. And we'd leave on a Friday afternoon and come back on a Sunday afternoon or Sunday evening. And we'd go to Kickapoo and have our little pup tents. And I don't know what we would do. We'd just ride around, play soldiers, you know, and so forth. And then the war broke out, and things got— and prior to that, there was an unsteadiness on the campus because of the war. People didn't, especially guys didn't know what was happening, because even prior to the war, world war breaking out, there were fellows that were signing up for the military.

And I'm not exactly sure, maybe some of it might have been economics, some of it might have been that they weren't doing well in school. I don't know what the reasons were. But I know when war broke out, and the reason I talked to this fellow, I called him up and I told him that you were coming here. Johnson. [Crosstalk.]

CD: Johnson, right?

DP: Bob Johnson.

CD: Bob Johnson and George.

DP: I said, tell me, "Can you review with me what happened?" I said, "Because as I get older, I get foggier and I can't quite think it through." And he said, well, and he told me where he was. I know that I was at the Virginia Theater going to a movie. And at 1:00, I think, is when they attacked Pearl Harbor, our time. And when we got done, the word got around the campus. And people didn't know what it meant that we were going into the war, because none of us had lived through anything like this before. And then things started churning on the campus.

And I don't know who I was with. I was with a group of guys. And we decided that we were going to march over to the president's house to ask for a day off so that we could reflect on being in the war, you know. And there were about 600 or 800, and I think that's all been recorded in the newspapers.

CD: How did you organize that group?

DP: Oh, I didn't organize it. Some of the older guys were organizing it. I was just a—

CD: And 600 people showed up that evening?

DP: Yeah, they all gathered on Green Street, and we just marched on over, you know.

CD: Where was the president's house at that time?

DP: Same place.

CD: Same place, okay.

DP: The president's house was built in 1928 or '29. And so there was a spokesman, and I think the spokesman might have been the fellow that was the top ROTC cadet. We refer to him as the

student colonel. And the president was, he wasn't, when I say demonstration, it was nice, you know. Just a nice group, very spirited, you know, gung-ho to the United States, down with Japan, all that stuff. And he said it was very important that the nation was going to need well trained people and intelligent people, which is why it was so important to go back to class, do well.

CD: So he came, you went to his door or he came out?

DP: Oh yeah, it was the front door, yeah.

CD: And he came out. He couldn't have invited all of you in, right?

DP: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

CD: So he came out and spoke to you.

DP: Right, yeah. But it was, and then we went back and, but from that point on, in '41 to the time I left, I concentrated heavily on the ROTC. I worked myself up to being the number two student who were in the ROTC. And that cup was one of the awards that I'd gotten for something. I don't remember what it was.

And I'm sorry I didn't have these other pictures. And I must have given it to Van Dyke. His wife wanted a picture because there's a picture of Van Dyke and myself and the president standing in front of the Union Building with a whole bunch of troops, ROTC guys all lined up, and the president's talking too. That was a good— that was when the first class, right after what would be the June of '42 was going off to military. And we just had kind of a farewell thing for them. And the president spoke. And that would have been a good picture to have.

And I have a lot of pictures of, some of these, I think, are picnics that we took. And that's a picnic. That's a president. I can't remember what that is. That's a sister of one of the fellows I [?] in the school, and these are— picture, there are three of us in front of where we lived, and this is our marching to the Union.

The whole campus, everything, many things revolved around the ROTC. Every Wednesday, we would have a drill of some sort, and then we'd all march over to the Union Building, and the Union Building had rooms downstairs called the Tavern and various things. We'd go down to the Tavern and have a Song Fest. And sometimes we, some of the, there'd be somebody got engaged and we'd maybe, we'd play the fraternity role. We'd go over to somebody's house and sing, *"You know, how do you do, Mary? Mary Lou, how do you do? How do you do? If you're feeling kind of blue, just come out and pitch some move. Do Mary Lou, how do you do?"*

That sort of thing, you know. Strictly collegiate sort of thing. Which I don't think they have today. I think the students are missing that. They don't know what they're missing. But anyway, and let's see what some of these other pictures might be. Yeah, that's the marching. There's one marching. There's a group, a group of us sitting somewhere. And this is out of Kickapoo. It was a field problem that we had. I guess that's just kind of horsing around over there.

But anyway, so a lot of things revolved around the ROTC. And if you want to get some good shots, go to the *Illio* of, you could see the transition of ’40, ’41, ’42, ’43.

And look up the military ball. That used to be probably the most glamorous ball dance. It would be at the Huff Gym. That’s where the major dances were. But they had a lot of ballroom dancing. That was a big social activity. And big bands like Betty Goodman and Harry James and Tommy Dorsey, Jimmy Dorsey, would play at the Union building. And—

CD: At the Huff Hall.

DP: Yeah. And if you didn’t have the money to go to the dance, you could pay a quarter and sit up in the balcony, you know. But that was the campus life. And every day you’d go to class, there would be more guys no longer in class. They’d be signing up. But what happened, and that’s one of the reasons why I called Bob, we were in the reserves. They put us in the reserves, and that was in January 1942. The Army figured that they had given us a year or two of training and they wanted us to keep that. And they didn’t want us to go out and break that training.

So they put us in the reserve so we could not sign up. Even though we would do that. I swear, I remember one class I had 39 cuts because I would be in St. Louis or Rock Island or Springfield trying to sign up, and they wouldn’t, they would sign up and then they called back and said, “Can’t take it, you’re in the reserves, you know.” But then right after the end of ’42, January ’43, then we were activated at that time.

CD: Do you know why you were activated in ’43?

DP: Oh yeah. They needed officers and they needed troops. They were going in pretty fast. And it was kind of nice because we went to Camp Grand first up at Rockford, I think. And then we went up to Camp McCoy in Wisconsin. And they had what they called a pre-OCS pool, an officer candidate pool. And the ROTC guys would be from Michigan State, from Michigan, Iowa, all the Big Ten schools. And we would all be mixed up then. And we’d have just a great time, you know, every day singing. On the march, you didn’t go on a march without singing. And that’s where I got pushed up a little bit because I knew these songs, I know how to use them, and they would ask me to lead the singing. And so music played a very important role for me. And then when there was an opening at the OCS camps and they’d send us there, wherever, the infantry guys went to Fort Benning, the artillery went to Fort Sill, and signal corps went to someplace else.

CD: You were at the Virginia Theater the night of December 7th, or the afternoon of December 7th. Do you remember, was it announced at the, what was announced as?

DP: No, it was only when the movie was over with it. I think probably what happened is that there was so much war motion going on in Europe, you know, a little bit of this and a little bit of that, and I think at that very early stage, people didn’t know just quite how to react to it. Maybe the people in the military, maybe they knew. But a bunch of college kids, you know, we weren’t

quite sure what it was all about except we wanted to fight and get the dirty Japs or whatever the case may be.

And it took a while before the news was, people were able to sift out things that we really knew what, that we were really— at first, we probably thought we were in a little, just a little scuffle. Now, if we would have been attacked here, it would have a totally different story. But, you know, Hawaii was miles and miles away. And I like, I suspect like other people, I was a little bit apprehensive as to what was happening. We called home and my parents knew, didn't know, any more than I did. And just a little bit more we began to learn the seriousness of it.

CD: And how did you learn about the war?

DP: Newspapers, radio, just stayed stuck to the radio. Didn't have television. We didn't have CNN at that time.

CD: Did the *Daily Illini* cover it at all?

DP: Oh, absolutely, yeah. I'm sure you'll find the picture of, I can't imagine that you wouldn't find it, certainly a story of the— and it wasn't declared like the March on Washington. It was just a group of guys that went over to the President's house to see. It was kind of a stupid thing to do when you come down.

CD: Was it all guys?

DP: As I mentioned, there were girls, guys brought their girlfriends along and so forth. And it was a little bit like a movie scene. And people saying they gotta do this and they gotta do that. And I suspect if you would have interviewed a lot of the people that were there, people who were maybe seniors who were dating, they might have had a different view of things. But I didn't, I didn't, all I knew is that I thought I was in good shape with my ROTC and they helped me get into the program that I wanted to get into.

CD: Was there, for that, back to the demonstration or the march to the president's house.

DP: I almost hate to call it a march. It was just kind of ambling over, I guess.

CD: Just a walk over to the president's house. Excuse me, was there any anti-Japanese sentiment?

DP: No, no. There were more sentiments against the Germans and Italians at that time that I remember, and because being Italian, I got the brunt of some of that.

CD: Did you?

DP: Yes.

CD: And you got it here as well?

DP: Yes, oh yeah.

CD: Can you tell me what form it took?

DP: Occasionally you'd get a, what I call them, probably a far-right kind of conservative that would call me a Dago or a Wop or something. But it wasn't anything serious, because when you grew up on the streets of Chicago, you got a lot of that stuff. But I don't remember anything, anything of that nature. Now I do remember in ‘40 before the war began that there were efforts by the Communists to be on this campus and just exactly what that what that was, I can't explain you because I, I don't know. But I do, and I do know that the Bund tried to try to get here.

CD: The German Bund.

DP: Yeah, they were they were in Philadelphia. They made some, some efforts in Chicago, and there you'd have to go into the newspapers to find out about those things. But it wasn't until several days, couple of weeks, and it wasn't until the Bataan March that you really started to develop a hate for Japanese. I didn't, you know, there was a great mystery about Asians, you know, at that time, and one of the contributing factors to that was a movie and a serial. Are you familiar with serials that they used to have? You go to the end of the serial, the hero is being thrown off the cliff, then you wait a week to go back to the—

CD: It was at the movie theater.

DP: At the movie theater, yeah. But there was a character in the movie called Fu Manchu, who was Asian, and I could almost draw you a picture of what I remember Fu Manchu to be. We used to draw these [?], you know, and a very sinister character. And one of the reasons, I think, that we no longer are calling people from Asia Orientals is because, it reflected back to the, it was an Oriental. And I didn't know it until rather recently, like maybe three or four years ago, that the Asians did not want to be called Orientals, because that was kind of a negative connotation to that.

CD: Back to a stereotype of—

DP: Yeah, yeah. You know, and one of the people I work with is this little Asian girl here. She's this cute, really talented violinist. And I just can't, you know, and I lived, when I lived in Japan, lived there for about 18 months, I got to know them. They were really nice people. And then, of course, I learned while I was there that a lot of the Japanese just did not like Tojo, who's the leader in the military. And even Yamamoto, the Navy guy, was not happy to get involved in the Pearl Harbor thing.

I don't know if you've ever read the book on the Pearl Harbor and the Pacific War. Yamamoto said something like, “I believe we've uncovered a sleeping giant.” He'd been in America, I believe. So I don't think there was any animosity between the people, but the leaders there were. But the attitude on the campus was, like a lot of campuses, highly spirited. Of course, more and more, there were just more girls than there were guys, you know.

CD: What was that like? Because fraternities were closing, right?

DP: Oh yeah, yeah, there was some closing there.

CD: When did military training, when was military training set up?

DP: It started about the time that I was leaving at the V-12 and the other program. One of the things that I thought was interesting, they started the Women's Auxiliary Training Corps. A group of women like the WAAC, you know, and I was selected as one of three of the ROTC to train them, you know. And it got to be a little bit funny and the guys would kid us about it, you know, because you'd get the, when you'd get the guys in the line, you'd say, you know, "suck on your gut, chest out," you know, "get in your butt," and here you're using those same phrases, and in those days, language was not used like it is today. Girls would not be shocked with that, but we didn't like it. Just as a pull in your chest or stick out your chest and so forth. But they were fun to work with, and they were good marchers. And that had to be, I suspect I should have looked at some of these things, but that had to be the fall of '42, I think, yeah.

CD: So tell me, what kinds of classes did you take?

DP: Well, I had music classes, and I had Psych 100, and I had geography, and I had educational philosophy, rhetoric.

CD: Did you have any favorites? If we put aside music. We know that you love music. Were there others?

DP: I didn't really enjoy any of the classes. And I didn't even really enjoy music that much because I knew that I was really working hard to get into the advanced ROTC program. My grades were pretty low when I left in service. As a matter of fact, when I tried to get in, the registrar told me, I was in Japan when I wrote back and wrote and said I wanted to come back to school. And she said, "Well, you'll have to meet the disciplinary committee first," because I was on probation. But you know, when I got back, I think, when I got back, I think I only got one B after that. The rest were all A's. I knew what I wanted to do. But I don't remember any classes that, I did enjoy playing in the band, and I did enjoy the military.

CD: And would the band play at sporting events?

DP: Oh, yeah, but you see, the band in those years was a military band. It was a concert band, then the first regimental band, noticed the military connection, and the second regimental band. And the second regimental band played every Friday for ROTC retreat in the armory. There would be a group of— that was our responsibility, the band's responsibility. But, and even the band was losing favor with me because I just felt like I needed to get—

One of the things that happened is that in order to get more and more recognition, they had special kind of organizations that parallel the military. And these were almost like honor fraternities. The top group was called Scabbard and Blade, and you had to have a 4.75 military average and I think a 3.5 university grade point average. And I worked my way up to being

captain of the group, the president of the group. And that all helped me get in higher position in the OCS, and it really helped me with OCS as well. But I was not a good student.

CD: Did you attend sporting events?

DP: Well, the band played all the football games. Yeah, and the Wizkids basketball team was here. And I was in class with some of the Wizkids players and Dyke Edelman, you know Dyke Edelman, we were in class together. And some of the, you know, Andy Phillips was in the Marines. And Gene Vance, who's still here on the campus, not doing very well, was in the infantry. But the two other guys were in artillery with me in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. So I managed to stay up with them. But mainly basketball and football of course, and track. We had a guy by the name of Herb McKinley, who was a national winner. He was from Kenya, I think. But that was about it.

CD: And was there a chief during that?

DP: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Except in 1943, '44, there wasn't then, and that's when I had left, but I knew her. Her name was Idelle Stith, and they called her Princess Illiniwek instead of Chief Illiniwek. And the guy that was the second chief, [Rubber Borcherts?], who was a legislator from Decatur area, he would not, there was a tradition of when the chief finished his term they signed the bonnet, you know. They would not let her sign the bonnet or the headdress whatever that was called. And it wasn't until the, the marching band had their 50th anniversary and they, when they honored the chief again that he relinquished and apologized to her publicly and she came back for the program.

CD: Yeah, terrific.

DP: Yeah.

CD: Terrific.

DP: I don't know if she's still living yet but, but she was a Pi Phi on the campus. Nice girl, yeah.

CD: Was there the same kind of reaction to the chief among the student body that we've seen in recent years?

DP: Oh, the chief was very important.

CD: He was?

DP: But as a band member, I only thought of the chief as just another part of the football show. I didn't get into the traditions at that time. But after the war, when I came back and I was a graduate student, I used to help the chief with his extra speaking engagements, help schedule him, you know. But there was none of that at that time. The thing that started all of that, of course, was when they brought the larger number of minority students, and they started questioning the rights of [?] students. And, you know, rightly so. I remember that the girl Sheila

Johnson, did you know that she established an endowed chair for me? She was the wife of the, she and her husband founded Black Entertainment Television.

CD: Yes.

DP: Yeah, and when she was a student here in 1966, there were 150 students, black students here, and she got a lot of, took a lot of beating, but she was a cheerleader. And she was very visible. And I helped her through several other scrapes and so forth. And so she established this $2 million chair for me. But she remembers what she had to go through. And I guess I protected her, but I don't remember that. I guess all I did was [?] come in the office at the house and she would cry and maybe answer some questions or call up somebody and say, "What's going on?" You know, "You can't-."

One thing was when she was a violinist the violin professor was from Hungary and he thought that that if you're going to be a violinist you have to completely devote your life to that. And she was a cheerleader and she got one of the only black cheerleaders in the country, got a lot of notoriety.

CD: This was in the mid-sixties?

DP: '67 I think maybe at that time. At that time, I was just going to be Dean of Students at that time. And the violin teacher thought it was an insult for a violinist to be a cheerleader, you know, break their fingers and so on. And he said he was going to dismiss her from the university. And she came over. And I said, "He can't do that, you know?" And I called up Dewey Branigan, the director, and he said the same thing, "He can't do that." And so she thought that I was kind of a god or something, got that taken care of.

And there were several other things that when she was a cheerleader, believe it or not, some of the white sorority houses wanted to recruit her. Not all, but some. And the black sorority girls started to threaten her by saying, "If you go in that house, we're going to beat you up." So Sheila came over and we talked that one. And you know what we did? We pulled the mafia trick. I knew the president of the Black Students Association. His name was Dave. Dave, Dave, Dave. Oh, gosh, he just talked. He's a judge down in Florida now. [CD laughs.] Dave Addison.

CD: Dave Addison.

DP: Dave Addison. And I said, "Sheila's taking a beating from the black girls in the sorority house." He said, "Well, let me handle it." So next thing I knew, it was all over with. And I said, "What'd you do?" And he said, "I just got some of the black brothers who were fraternity guys to tell their sisters to knock it off." And that's what they did. You know, that's a typical mafia thing that you do. And she thought that that was another wondrous thing. But anyway, so we've been good friends ever since.

But anyway, the campus was, it was getting to be an absence of male. Marge got here shortly after I left. I didn't know her, of course. She came from New York.

CD: New York City?

DP: New York State, near south of Rochester.

CD: Okay.

DP: And her band director wanted her to come here, or Michigan, which is the two best bands in the country at that time. The band at that time did not have women in the band. But because the guys were leaving, they needed players. So they accepted women in the band. Can you believe that? No women marchers, I think in the first class of women that was in the university bands.

CD: Wow.

DP: Yeah. And it wasn't until 1968 that there was women in the marching band. And the funny thing that happened on that one is I was, the Chancellor called me to his office, Jack Pelison. And he said, "Why aren't there women in the marching band?" And I said, "Because Edward Kissinger doesn't like women in the marching band." He was a stubborn Dutchman. And we talked a little bit more about it, a little bit more background. And so he picked up the telephone and he had the operator call the band department and speak to Edward Kissinger. He said, "Professor Kissinger?" And apparently he said, yes. He said, "This is the Chancellor, Jack Pelveson." And he repeated it. "This is Chancellor Jack Pelveson." He said, this was in the spring, I guess maybe May or so.

CD: Of '68?

DP: Yeah, '68. He said, "There will be women in the marching band in the fall." And he hung up. That was it. Yeah, so but anyway.

CD: So when did Marge come?

DP: 1944.

CD: 1944.

DP: And I didn't meet her until after I got out of service in the spring of 19, the second semester of 1947.

CD: So when did you, so you left here to be, for Officer's Candidate School, right?

DP: Early '33, early '43.

CD: Early '43. And you had finished your undergraduate degree?

DP: No, oh no, I didn't, no. I probably had the equivalent of a sophomore plus, yeah.

CD: So you went off for OCS?

DP: OCS, and then they got assigned in the military. I was in the military overall, I think 42 months, if I'm not mistaken.

CD: And you were in the Pacific most of the time?

DP: Well, I was in here in the States and in the Pacific. We went to the Philippines and then through the islands and up to Okinawa and then Japan. We were supposed to invade. We were trained to invade Japan. And I don't know if you're familiar with the Japanese, you know, this is Honshu here. Right up here was Hokkaido. Are you familiar with? Not even Japanese are not too familiar with Hokkaido, other than a good place to ski, you know. But we were supposed to invade here, right in between Honshu and Hokkaido. And it would have been easy for us because they didn't have any armament at all. All of the armament was down in Tokyo and Kyushu and so forth. And as I said earlier, I just thoroughly enjoyed my time in Japan.

CD: So when did you get to Japan?

DP: Oh gosh, we got to our island very shortly after the signature. I think the signature, the signing was in September, maybe 14th, that's six in my mind. And just a few days after that, we landed in, there's a picture here somewhere of it.

CD: Do you remember where you were when you heard about the—

DP: In the Pacific.

CD: The bombings of Hiroshima?

DP: In the Philippines. Yeah.

CD: How did you hear about it? What did people say?

DP: They announced it, the Navy announced it. I think I was aboard ship at that time, yeah.

CD: Do you remember the reaction on the ship?

DP: A lot of us didn't know what the atomic bomb was. Except we knew what atoms. I was not a physicist, but the thing that really got us is when we learned that it killed over 100,000 people, yeah.

CD: How did you learn that? In the *Stars and Stripes*?

DP: [?] No, I didn't get the *Stars and Stripes*. Gosh, I hardly remember reading the *Stars and Stripes* other than old *Stars and Stripes*. But everything pretty much, I was in communications, so we got a lot of stuff from radio, yeah. There was a real connection between the Navy and the Army and Marines and so forth, and we had access to, and we had a code system that if there was something that, you know, sometimes there would be a newsflash, and before that they would give out a certain number, and we knew that that was a coded message. We knew that there was more information that we needed to seek out. And there was nothing, just a little bit more information about the attack.

CD: When you learned that that many people had been killed, did people talk about it on the ship?

DP: Oh, yeah, yeah. We didn't know the implications of it. When something new like that happens, you have a reaction, and it's a reaction of maybe some of it is an unknown reaction, you're asking questions. But then after the news has been disseminated, then you begin to get the reality of things. But there wasn't what I think maybe you might be leading up to, maybe you're leading up to the question of people being concerned about dropping an atom bomb. That did not come up until months later, I think, when people who, maybe humanists, were beginning to, boy, I can remember, in New York, they came up with a, and I don't remember what it was, I wish I remembered the name of the play, but they turned it into a movie about America being hit by atom bomb, hydrogen bomb, and people were building caves and bomb shelters and things of that nature. That still continued a little bit even into the Korean War.

CD: Well, it continued into my childhood in the '60s.

DP: Oh, did it really?

CD: Oh yeah, yeah. Reminds me to ask about, and I'm going to forget what it was I wanted to ask you, that triggered something. Oh, yes. Did you have a sense when you were on campus during the war of any kind of research going on that supported our military efforts?

DP: Well, I don't think so. I think that that was, I think the only place that that might have been done would have been up at Washington. Yeah, I think when the war broke out, the main effort was to get troops ready and get in the war. And I didn't hear anything else. Oh, I'm sure that there was a think tank group somewhere, you know, answering wise and things of this nature.

I've always felt sorry for the two Japanese guys, Sakura and whatever his name is, they were the liaison people from Japan that came to this country to meet with President Roosevelt to see if they could ward off the war. And as they were typing, you know, an apology, war broke out. They didn't even know it themselves. There must be a story somewhere that they must have felt like dummies, you know, when that happened.

CD: Yeah. So you entered Japan, and then you were stationed in Japan for a period after the war?

DP: Yeah, in Hokkaido. Yeah, and then I signed up for a second tour of duty because I liked it so much, and I moved down to the Tokyo area.

CD: And what was that like?

DP: Warmer and very flat, a lot of rice paddies, but I liked Hokkaido because that was, it was a lot like Canada, you know, with mountains, skiing, and beautiful winter scenes. And I got

acquainted with the youngsters up there. And when I was down in the Tokyo area, it became a little bit maybe impersonal. It was more like an army base.

And up in Hokkaido, we lived in a department store. We didn't live in barracks. You know, and we lived in the top three floors of the department store. I started this, this is my outfit here. I'm in the center there. I was a commanding officer of that group. But I started this dance band where we went on tour.

CD: Oh, wow.

DP: A show band. We did vaudeville shows. We traveled all over Japan playing for the troops. And we'd play concerts that, I have to tell you about this story, I've shared this with, when the band was going, when we put our show together, we were going to go to Sapporo to play for the General. And at that time, the Japanese had narrow gauge trains, the cars were smaller, and they were probably maybe half the size of, maybe a little bit larger, but they were smaller. [CD crosstalk.] And we had reserved a whole car to get our equipment and all the guys in there. It was more than we needed, but that's the way they wanted it.

And so when we got to the train station, there was a big commotion over there. And we had two pianos and string bass and drums and instruments and all of that to carry, plus luggage and so on. And when we got there, there was a big commotion, and what had happened is that the train master forgot to reserve a car for us. And what he was doing is he was taking out, he was getting all the Japanese that were in that car, and at that time they were packed because they were all going, shortly after the war, they were still going back home or wherever they were going. And they were angry. They were angry at us for making this happen. So finally, we told them, we said, “Give us only a part of the car. Half of the car would be enough.” And so we did, and we sat, here's the car here, and we sat over here, and the Japanese were over here, all crowded. And a lot of them standing. And so some of the guys in here were looking this way at the Japanese, no smiles, they were still [scouting?] us.

I was sitting up against the wall here looking at them, and we had the seats open up, you know, the seat facing here, the seat facing here, and the two guys sitting on this side over here, they were talking about the chord progression for a tune called “Ain’t Misbehaving,” and they were, they weren't arguing it, but they were trying to get it right. And so the guitar player got his guitar out. And when he got his guitar out, I just happened to be looking at the [?]. This all happened in a matter of seconds, you understand. And they were interested. And then, like all guitars do, they strum it, you know. And that got their attention. The clarinet player, he didn't see this. He got his clarinet, and so they started playing the piece, you know, to get the chords. And then when you started to get, ooh, you know, smiles and quizzical looks, you know. And then the bass player saw this. And it was like a movie scene. It really was.

And the bass player brought a string bass out and he started accompanying. And then the drummer got a snare drum and the brushes. And we had a little jam session going. And the

people that were on the train, they were angry at us at first, that we were on our way to Japan, or Tokyo Sapporo. And by the time we got off the train, you would have thought we were cousins and nephews. They were giving us cookies and apples and smiles and shaking and bowing, and so it shows you what music does. And it was something I'll never forget.

The other thing I'll never forget, the general's interpreter was a Reverend Kusama, and we still have his wedding present that he sent us 60 years ago, and he knew that I was in music, and I got to know him pretty well. He went to Union Theological Seminary, and he spoke good English, and he said, maybe his daughter or nephew or somebody was going to a middle school, and he wondered if I would go there and teach them some American music. Because they were beginning to play old marches and folk songs and some of the early Christmas music. And the kids liked it, you know, it was new to them. And so he said, “Would you come over and do that?” And I said, “Sure.”

So I went over and the first thing that I was shocked at, as soon as I walked in the room they all stood up and bowed. That's what they do with teachers, you know. Today I still think that they do that. And so, and one of the teachers was a woman. I was about that time, I was about 26, 25 years old. And she was about 40, 45. And she'd gone to Temple University in Philadelphia in music. And had been working with a group of 60 women. And, 60 women. And as we got to know one another, we started talking and, and we were talking about the Messiah. And we were planning to have the first Christmas at the minister's church.

CD: And this was in Sapporo?

DP: No, Hakodate. Hakodate was the second city in Sapporo, Hokkaido. And where was I? Oh, and the more we talked, you know, when you get in conversation that one thing leads to another, we said, “Wouldn't it be good if we had some fellas?” And we said, “Wouldn't it be good if we could sing at this church service together?” So I sent out a memo to the general's office asking for guys who would sing in their church choirs or synagogues and would want to join up with 60, I heard them, they were really good. And boy, we got floods of them, you know, and so we put together about a hundred, 120 voices and we sang parts of the Messiah for that first Christmas Day and that was really a very meaningful kind of experience. Which shows what music can do.

CD: Absolutely. So when did you leave Japan, and did you know you were coming back to the University of Illinois?

DP: Yeah, when I first tried to get in, they told me I couldn't get in because I had to meet the disciplinary committee. I said I couldn't meet the disciplinary committee because I was in Japan. But I got in, Dean Palmer worked it out for me, and I quickly got in school and got back in classes at the second semester of '47. And that was a good year because when I, in the fall of '47, I didn't get back in the band because I hadn't been playing at all during those 40-some months. And Mark Heinze, the director of bands, wanted me to get back in. And I said, “I just don't think I could play again.” I said, “Even my clarinet isn't working.” And he said, “Well, I'll loan you my

clarinet." So he loaned me his clarinet and I had mine fixed. He said, "You won't want to miss this one because the marching band is going to go to New York to play Army in football." So we played at Yankee Stadium.

CD: Oh my gosh.

DP: So that was a nice kind of return to the campus.

CD: I'll say. And so you came back and you finished your undergrad degree?

DP: I got my bachelor's and then I went right into my master's and then I got my master's in '49 and then taught in Macomb for two years, Quincy for four years, and Urbana for four years, and then I came to the university.

CD: So tell me how you met Marge.

DP: In the educational psychology class.

CD: As an undergraduate?

DP: Undergraduate, yeah. And she tells a story that I purposely wanted to sit next to her. I tell her that it was the only seat in the room. But anyway, and we'd been playing in the band, but we didn't know it. She was on the other side of the band, and I was on—

CD: How big was the band?

DP: About 120 pieces. Much better than it is now. And it had a more symphonic sound than it has now. I just really don't enjoy going to band concerts, any more music they play is so contemporary and one of my old friends calls it squeak squawking music and so on. But you could hear melody in those days. You could hear Strauss and you could hear Robert Russell Bennett or Gershwin or Aaron Copland and so forth, Granger, Percy Granger. But a lot of young composers in their writing, it seems like their writing tunes for sounds, you get different sounds, and I just haven't gotten wrapped up into that yet. Anyway, that's it.

CD: Well, so you met at psych, and did you [sing?].

DP: Then we started dating.

CD: Yeah, what did folks do when they dated here? Where'd you go?

DP: Well, our first date, I think I may have mentioned some of these coke places. They called them coke joints in those days.

CD: Coke joints?

DP: Coke joints, yeah. Coke was a nickel or a dime. And we went to the place on Wright Street called Hanley's. And it was just a fairly narrow place, a little dance floor, and every afternoon

they'd have a, like from four to six maybe they'd have a band playing. You could dance, you know, and so forth.

CD: Nice.

DP: And the one thing I remember, both Marge and I being short, when she sat down and she had the coke and the chair was low, the straw was up, she couldn't reach it, so we had to bend it. Isn't that stupid to remember that?

CD: No.

DP: And we went to dances. We went to oh the military ball and freshman frolic and whenever there was a good band. And as I said, you could go to the dance, it would probably cost around $4 a couple, but then you could pay a quarter to sit up in the balcony.

And then we dated all the way up until about Christmas of '47, and from ’47. And then during that Christmas holiday, I went down to meet her folks. Then were married in '48.

CD: So you went to New York to meet her folks?

DP: Yeah.

CD: Oh, wow.

DP: We [trained?]. She lived in a little town called Hornell, New York. And we were married in New York, her town, on July 3, 1948. And we celebrated our 60th wedding anniversary.

CD: Last year. Congratulations.

DP: Thank you, yeah.

CD: So generally I ask folks if there was anything I didn't ask about or anything you'd like to add to close out the conversation, any memories you may have.

DP: No, I know when I would come back on leave, I'd go visit my folks and then I'd invariably come down here, I don't think I have.

CD: So this was during the war. Okay.

DP: And I think I only had one leave, as a matter of fact. And the campus was different, and I ran into a friend, what's her name? Her married name was Taggart, but she married a friend of mine, and we met on the STAR Course Committee, it's a student organization, and she was also a Pi Phi. And where the Sedells this was. And she invited me to Sunday dinner. And I don't know how familiar you are with sorority houses of the past. Very, very formal.

CD: Oh, really?

DP: Very, very formal with, you know, about five forks and ten spoons.

CD: Really?

DP: Well, I don't know what the, but a lot of them. And I said, oh, what the heck was her name? Anyway, I said, “I don't want to go there.” I said, “I'll be the only guy there.” And she said, “No, there'll be other fellows who [?] leave.” It wasn’t that way. I was the only fella. And then she was a jokester. And she would purposely drop a fork or a knife and everybody would turn and look at me.

So the campus was just void of guys. And I think if you looked at the DI, there'd be some stories about all girls in the classroom and so forth. But the campus was different. When they brought in the V-5 and V-7 and V-12, there were at least fellas here. And then there was a lot of dating between the guys at Chanute Field and the campus for the dances.

But after the war, it was just a rush of things. The guys were coming back to get into class, and the campus started to change. And I think for the better, it became a more mature campus. And then it got too large, you know.

CD: What do you mean it became a more mature campus?

DP: I think the veterans that were older, they didn't, the veterans started to, you know, the women, I think we said this before in the oral history of the quad, that the girls had to go in at 10:30. And some of the older guys thought that that was kind of childish, you know. Graduate students thought that was kind of childish. And the guys and the people from the graduate students from foreign countries thought they were just kind of, yeah.

You know, when I was a student in 1941, there were only 300, a few more, 25 whatever, professional students and about 300 graduate students. So you could see how many. And the professional students were lumped into the 300. There were very few, relatively few international students. And today, I don't know what it is, but the last time I checked on this maybe a year ago, there were students that came in from 113 different countries. Yeah, that's what I mean by maturity.

CD: Okay.

DP: Just a more serious group in those days, even during those early warriors, there was still a lot of dances and frivolity, whereas kids don't accept these so much today. And it's not that they're more serious, it's that they have different interests, like maybe drinking beer, you know. But anyway.

CD: Well, I appreciate this very much.

DP: Oh, that’s all right. I hope it was interesting.

CD: It was very interesting. I mean—