

University of Illinois Student Life 1928-1938
Oral History Project
Charles McNaughton – Class of '28
Muncie, Indiana
June 16, 2001

START OF TAPE 1 SIDE A

Ellen Swain: This is an oral history interview for the University of Illinois Archives. The interviewer is Ellen Swain, the narrator Charles McNaughton, an alumnus from the class of 1928. We are at Mr. McNaughton's home in Muncie, Indiana and the date is June 16th, 2001.

Charles McNaughton: Let me see, I don't know how far back, I was the ornriest kid in town, I don't know whether you want to go back to my pranks or not.

ES: Sure let me have your state your full name and your birth date.

CM: Okay. You name it, you want me to go now [*laughter*]?

ES: Yeah.

CM: My name is Charles R. McNaughton and I was born in Connersville [Indiana] September 15th, 1905 and that makes me 95 plus, and I don't know exactly where you want me to jump.

ES: Yeah just tell me a little bit about growing up, whether you had brothers or sisters or what your parents did?

CM: Oh yeah. Well I had one brother that was two years older than I and a sister that was five years younger. I was trying to think, the pranks that we did. I think they were unusual and extraordinary, and almost put me in reform school at an early age. I loved to fly kites. I made this big seven-foot kite, and had it up in the air, anchored by a wire around a telephone post. A little kid who was about 3 years old came over from next door. I made a trapeze for him and tied it to the kite. I had raised him about ten feet in the air, when his mother came over and just started screaming that she wanted me arrested.

There is another stunt that I did. A friend of mine and I were interested in electricity, and in those days, they didn't have any public services. Well, you might say, in those days we didn't have any utilities at all, no electricity, no radio. We entertained ourselves with just things that we could think up to do. When they finally installed plumbing, the pipes were on the outside. My friend and I had taken a magneto out of an automobile and put a crank on it so we could form electricity. We would wait until a bathtub was being used then give the bather a shock by hooking this generator to the pipe into the tub. The louder the scream, the more we loved it! Everybody took a bath on Saturday because before there was inside plumbing, in order to bathe, you had to cut the kindling, bring in the coal, pump the water from outside into a tub, start your fire and heat the water, take it upstairs, and stand in the tub and do your bathing. That's why I only bathed once a week. And you have heard the phrase, "Don't throw the baby out with the

water.” Well you took turns. The father bathed first then, (generally in the same water) then came the mother, then the kids, and then of course the baby last, and that’s how you got that expression.

There was a grocery store nearby that had thrown out a big supply of Quaker Oats, really twenty-four boxes. There were some people with open automobiles and others with open buggies that had to drive under a nearby railroad tracks in order to get downtown. One Saturday, we decided to stand by the overhead railroad track and dump that rolled oats into any open vehicle that passed underneath. All went as planned until we had one or two boxes left and decided to dump it all in this next car. Well, this was a police car, and we dumped those two right on the police. They looked like Keystone Comedy Cops you know. Fortunately this railroad was back of our house on about a twenty foot bank, where the weeds were growing up pretty high and we had dug tunnels, well they were caves really. When we saw the cops, we ran down and hid in those caves, and the cops couldn’t find us. But the next day they knew who we were, and if they could have proved it, they were going to send us to reform school.

We finally got telephones and the wires were on the outside. We had another phone, with two wires and pins in it, and we’d stick those pins into a victim’s live wire while the women gossiped. We’d tune in and say, “You big, fat mouth woman you, you just gossip all the time,” and you’d hear them cuss each other, “Who said that, did you say that?” After we would get them all worked up, we’d go to the next house. Now you don’t hear that being done everyday by kids.

On day at high school, a preacher was scheduled to talk to our assembly of about four hundred kids, and he was so dull that everybody dreaded his coming. So I said we ought to liven that thing up a little bit. I knew the janitor pretty well and I went down and talked to him. He let me go up to the attic, where I found there was a large skylight over the stage, and if I raised that skylight, the podium would be directly under me. At the same time, I discovered a life-size skeleton from the Biology Department. On Assembly Day, I took that skeleton, lowered it through the skylight and dangled it over the speaker’s head. The audience went crazy. They thought it was great! The speaker thought he was great, because everyone was laughing. The principal spotted me up there (and I suspected he would) and quickly put guards at the only two attic exits. No problem – with the help of the janitor and a rug, I was prepared to slide to the basement through a large air duct. I made the quick trip, came back upstairs and asked the principal if I could “help hunt that kid.” He looked at me and shook his head, and that was the closest I ever got to going to reform school. Those were just a few things I did, but I did a lot more.

I am trying to think. When I went to high school, I was a small boy, but I made four high school teams. As a freshman, I made the baseball, basketball, and track lineups and won the tennis championships and thought I had a pretty good athletics future ahead. In my sophomore year, our basketball team had an out of town game with Cambridge City, a small school about ten miles away. It was very cold weather, about then or fifteen below zero. We rode in an old automobile with a canvas top, and it was open of course. We were in the back seat with the snow blowing in, with only a blanket for cover. We played our basketball game and in those days the team didn’t take a shower. We went from the basketball court into the automobile in foul weather and we got home. The next day or so the coach and four of us players got scarlet fever. In those days they didn’t have any cure for it – you got, that was it. Well the coach and three players all died, and the doctor, I remember, came and talked to my dad outside my door. He says, “I’ve done all I can for your son, that’s it!” And I knew I was next, you know, but

fortunately for me, the good man upstairs was looking at me or something, helping me. A young doctor, seeking a cure for this disease, had gone to osteopathic school in Kirksville, Missouri, then set up a practice in Connersville. He heard about me, thought he might help me so he asked my dad if he could treat me. My dad said, "Yeah!" So he worked on me everyday for two weeks, massaging the poison out of my body. That saved my life; it's the only reason I'm here. The guy was so good, New York heard about him. He was in Connersville only six months before he went to New York and had a great practice, but you know something, the good Lord saved me there, on that one.

I finally grew up and graduated from high school. A man down the street told me about the University. He was good in chemistry and had heard that Illinois had the best chemistry school in the world, and they did at that time. They discovered one of the unknowns, I don't know whether you are up to date on that, but they called it Illinium. My uncle was a builder, but he was not an architect. He built the buildings and was called the superintendent, but the architect told him what to do. He built the Ball Memorial Hospital here in Muncie. He also built the Bell Building in Indianapolis for the Bell Telephone Company. It was about a 10 or 12 story building, and later they wanted to move it but keep it intact all the time that it was being moved. So he moved that from one lot to the other, while people kept working. I thought that was tremendous, and I admired him, I thought he was great. So he said, "Why don't you go to Illinois, they've got the best architectural school in the country. Why don't you go there and study architecture and we'll work together. You design it and I'll build it!" I said, "Well that's great!" And so that's how I heard of Illinois.

My brother heard us talking about what a great school it was and enrolled. He and another boy took up engineering, two or three others took up coaching, so there were five of us at one time at Urbana. We decided to go to Illinois as a team since we were on the basketball team at home. We all went there studied in the various schools that I've just told you about.

ES: This is right after high school?

CM: Right after high school, we decided to go to Illinois because of this neighbor. My brother graduated, of course, two years ahead of me, and he went to Bendix in South Bend, Indiana, as an engineer, and did quite well as did the other engineer. The other two were coaches, as well as athletes, so they did quite well. They had coaching jobs and so forth. Well in my case, in the late 20s I had to work a lot and spent a lot of time at work. Architecture is a little tough, and took a lot of time. Every night I had to draw for hours, but I could draw. One day the Dean called me in and said, "There is a Depression coming on. They tell me in Chicago that there are no buildings being built or even planned and I'm advising you and all the other guys to change your major, because there are no jobs." And I thanked him for that. Well I analyzed what I had. I knew that I had a lot of drawing experience, by having worked at the McFarlan Motor Car Company in Connersville, Indiana. I don't know whether you heard about that or not, have you?

ES: Uh-huh

CM: Well the McFarlan Motor Car Company made one car a day, that's all they turned out. While I was a senior in high school they called Bill Crone who was my drafting teacher. They asked him to send out a student for a drafting job and he sent me out because I was his number one student, he said. He sent me over there and I worked on the McFarlan. Now the head

designer needed an assistant because he was a drunkard and he was gone a lot. He would tell me what to do and I'd just draw it up. I had a drawing board about 8 by 15 feet that hung on the wall, the T-square would hang down on the board and I'd draw that car full size on that space. That's the way they did it.

ES: Now tell me when this was.

CM: This is 1922, I graduated from high school in '23. It was right in that time.

ES: In that period.

CM: Yeah. I was about 18 then. I just loved that job. We designed cars for movie stars and celebrities. We didn't have a direct railroad train from Chicago down to Connersville, they'd come in to Richmond. My job was to go to Richmond, pick up these celebrities and bring them back to Connersville to get their cars. So I met several, but I think the most outstanding were Paul Whiteman, Jack Dempsey, and Wallace Reed who was a movie star in those days, and Fatty Arbuckle. Paul Whiteman had an open top McFarlan, full size car. He had parked it in Indianapolis at the Circle Theatre, and the crowds came around. They had never seen a car like that. The police made him move it because the traffic was jammed up. Here's what I remember, but the biggie was the gangster in Chicago. Al Capone wanted a car special. He wanted bullet proof glass; he wanted steel plates in the side—bulletproof; he wanted a machine gun turret in the back; and he wanted a turret in the bottom, so he could drop nails and tacks and bits of glass. He also wanted to do 90 miles an hour. Well our car would do 90, (and the police in Chicago could only do 60) and we turned this out for him. I went to Richmond to meet the henchman he had sent down to pick it up. I'll never forget. He gave me a price list that looked like a laundry list. For breaking a guys knee, it was maybe \$100 and breaking his arms \$150 and on down the list. At the bottom, I'll never forget, they'd kill a man for \$500 and that was their price list for services rendered.

A lady from Cleveland had a prize dog, (she had just won a national contest in New York) and she wanted a roadster designed so the dog would have a platform right in back of the front seat. So we designed this car, and it cost \$18,000 then. We designed it just for that dog with a comfortable padded space with a little fence around it. That was a little different than most cars.

INTERRUPTION.

CM: The drafting that I had at McFarlan Motor Company set me up pretty good for drafting at Illinois Architectural School, because mostly what you do is draw. What I'm saying, I got along fine there. When my advisor told me that I should get out of architecture, and get something else. I looked around and found that teaching drafting was the best thing to salvage all the training that I'd had. I went into teaching and came out as a vocational teacher, since I'd had all this practical drafting. Then my first job was at Richmond High School. Lets see, I was trying to think, that was 1928. I was about 20 years old, and I had students that were 21 and so I had an interesting time at Richmond. I was young and liked to do things with the students, and so I organized a boy's golf team in 1930. Richmond High had never had a golf team and there was not budget for one. It cost me to drive them around, feed them and furnish the golf balls for

play. That was unusual, but I didn't think much about it – I was just happy with it all. During my 12 year coaching career, golf became an accredited sport and we were able to win a State Championship. In the winter time, we practiced in the gym and had local pros come in for some professional training. I think that's why we were better than the others. Last spring a gentlemen called me and said, "Mac, I'd like for you to come down to Richmond. We're going to honor you, and it's worthy. We represent golf in Richmond, and since you've contributed more than anyone else we know of, we are going to put you in the Hall of Fame for golfing in Richmond." My wife went with me and we had a good time – they really put me on, and gave me a big plaque, that is duplicated in every pro shop in Richmond today.

Shortly after my arrival at Richmond, the principal called me in and he said, "Mac, after we win a ball game or a tournament, our students go out and tear up a little losing town like Cambridge City or Centerville. "We've got to find some way to stop that." And I said, "Boys go where the girls are and I think if we start a cheer section we will have the problem solved." I chose 100 of the prettiest girls in Richmond High and created the Block R. As a draftsman, I'd have a new feature every week, and they'd hold up flash cards to spell out yells and make the pictures. We gained national attention and the Scholastic Magazine said we were the outstanding cheer section in the country, and that pleased me. The athletic teams at Richmond High were called the "Red Devils." To emphasize the team spirit, I designed a huge head of a devil. It was made of heavy red cardboard, cut into manageable squares that could be gradually raised to create a monstrous face with slanted eyes and open mouth. When completed, the eyes lit up with red lights and the mouth belched smoke made by a chemical mixture. All this action was accompanied by a chorus of the "Bone Song." Sure enough it worked – we didn't have any more trouble with the boys destroying property because they stayed for the girls and parties.

ES: I wanted to, you mentioned this, when did you switch majors? You went into drafting because the dean had told you—

CM: I had about two years in the Architectural School. I shifted over to education in 1926.

INTERRUPTION.

CM: Getting back to the poverty side you first mentioned, the four of us, or sometimes five, needed an inexpensive way to travel from Connorsville to Urbana, and so my brother who was a pretty good mechanic then, bought an old Model-T Ford, for \$25. Being a good mechanic, he had that car running like a top. The car didn't have any top on it, and so we'd all stack in there with our luggage, and take off in this 1913 Ford. We changed tires about every twenty or thirty miles, but we could do it so quickly, it didn't slow us down very much. In those days, most of the roads were dirt, and it was particularly bad when you got to Illinois because it was mud. We had about ten miles of brick road at Danville because they had a brickyard there. That was the only paved highway but then, it was just wide enough for one car. If it was muddy and another car coming, you had to get over in the mud, and sometimes you'd get stuck, but those were the troubles and tribulations of getting out there. Now, as I say, I was short on money, and so my budget for the year was \$360 - just what I had planned on.

ES: How are you able to finance school, did your parents help you?

CM: None. I had no help at all. I worked in the factories – different factories every summer. I laid out one year. I should have graduated in '27, but I had to lay out because I ran out of money. I worked full time, and I paid every penny of my education, no help.

ES: Did they want you to go to school? Did your parents want you to go?

CM: Yeah, yeah they wanted me to, but they paid one year for my brother, which is when they ran out of money [*laughter*]. That's a long story too. Now my father was postmaster at Connersville and he had a pretty good job. His father had come from Boston in 1856, I think, to Connersville and started the gas plant there. There was a gas boom in Muncie and Connersville, and he took advantage of that resource, did all right. I think he left my father in pretty good financial condition. Dad invested some money in Lexington Motor Car Company. It went under. He invested more money in to Krell Piano. It went under. Then his dad bought him a drug store, the Al Drugstore, across from the Courthouse, which was the only one in town. Dad knew nothing about the business so he hired a guy to come in and run it. Well this fellow kept most of the profits apparently, because it went bankrupt, and Dad couldn't understand it, because it was *the* drugstore in town. But anyway, the guy outsmarted him, and then when our store closed after the bankruptcy, he opened up his own store and paid cash for it. That's where my dad lost all his money, and that's when I needed it.

ES: So did you just work during the summers, or did you work when you were at school too, during the school year?

CM: No I couldn't work at the school because my class work, drafting and architecture, took all my time. I just worked at the factories each year, but fortunately Connersville was booming and there were factories all over town. You worked any time you wanted. The salary for everybody was \$24.50 - that's what you made per week. Even the married men got that, so we—

Mrs. McNaughton: Didn't you budget for \$5 a week?

CM: When I got out there, I had to make a budget. I had \$360 for the school year, and I could get by on that but now you can't buy books for that. I had \$10 a week. The room was three, board five, that's eight, and then \$1 for incidentals, and \$1 left for social life. My social life consisted of dating this little girl that lived across the street in some kind of sorority.

START OF TAPE 1 SIDE B

CM: So my social life consisted of going down to Bradley Hall and it cost seventy-five cents. After we bought two cokes at a dime a piece, I had a nickel to just throw around anywhere I wanted – that was my weeks budget. That was tough going, but the tuition then was \$50 for in state and \$75 for out of state for the year. Compared to what it is today, I did get a break there.

ES: Now you said you weren't in a fraternity because you—?

CM: We all stayed together in an apartment, as a basketball team, all of us from Connersville stayed in one apartment.

ES: Was it expensive to belong to a fraternity?

CM: Yes it was. Well more than I had. They wouldn't consider it as much but even though I had several offers, I just couldn't afford it.

ES: Did students want to belong to the Greek—?

CM: Oh yes. You were out if you didn't, and it was the thing to do – was to belong to a fraternity. I do remember one Jewish fraternity that put all their stuff in storage during the Christmas holidays when things were going tough, and then for some reason that house burned down, and they collected the insurance. I remember that was near our house, and I heard about it. Everybody was having a tough time in those days, but everybody wanted to get into the fraternity because you weren't anybody until you did. Fortunately for us, a lot of them admired the way we lived as a group. We won the basketball championship there, and almost won one in baseball. One of our boys hit a homerun in the ninth inning and the official, (we were playing the fraternity champions for championship of the school), fraternity man and he said the ball was foul. It wasn't of course, and we should have won that game. There was a big fight but they had the score book and we lost that. We should have won another championship, because we had a good bunch of boys that played together.

ES: Did the fraternity men and the independents socialize at all? You said you played them in a game.

CM: No, no, no. If you weren't in a fraternity you were out of it. Another thing I remember, I was dating a cute little gal, I liked her, but she was Catholic, and she had me go to the Catholic church with her. So I went to the Catholic church a couple times, and of course I didn't get up and bow and all that stuff like they do to go through their service. About the third date I had with her, the priest met us at the door as we left, and he called her aside. He says, "I notice that the boy you're dating is a Protestant. I don't want you to date him anymore." I'll never forget that. That broke my heart for a while.

ES: So she took his advice, huh?

CM: Yeah, she had to do it. Then I got me another girl [*laughter*]. But—

ES: How were Protestant-Catholic relations on campus? Were there any problems?

CM: No problems, no outwardly problems because the Catholics were a very small minority, they weren't important.

ES: What about black students, do you remember black students?

CM: I don't remember any black students at all, very few were there, I don't remember any. We had a number of Jews from Chicago, I lived in Connersville where we had about three or four families - the Hoburgs, who owned a men's store, and a few that owned big stores, that's all the Jews we had. As to their children, I couldn't tell any difference. We were just as sociable to them as we were to anyone else. We had four Negro families who lived up on the Fifth Street hill, and they were servants really to the wealthy people in Connersville. They kept in their little place. I was on the track team with Herald Sleat who was a black boy and I just loved that kid. We got along just fine. But I didn't know any better. Before I went to Illinois, the Jews that I knew were just like everyone else and we'd take them in. At Illinois, I found that when you were lining up to get into a class or something that was about ready to close, the Jews would come and crowd ahead, and they would push and shove. One guy told me, he says, "Well there are Jews and there are K----. These guys are K----." I never have forgotten that. I learned my lesson there.

ES: Yeah, what kinds of things did you do for fun?

CM: Let's see.

Mrs. McNaughton: You went to see Red Grange whenever possible didn't you?

CM: Yeah, well I was just about all of my social life, that's all I did. We'd go to all the games. I didn't miss any football. I guess that's what we did for social life, and Red Grange turns out to be one of the greatest football players ever. I didn't miss one of his games in three years. They, of course, built the Memorial Stadium just for him, and I watched it go up. I was trying to think what we did, that's way back there.

ES: Were athletics important to students, were the athletic events attended well?

CM: Oh yes, oh yes, the basketball place was packed. They built a new basketball arena while I was there, and it was going good. Football, we'd all live from one week to another to watch Red Grange, of course. Now I'll never forget the Michigan game which was the first game that Red played since he couldn't play as a freshman. He played as a sophomore with a lot of write-ups about it. At the Michigan game, Red who played backfield was standing between the goal posts. On the kickoff he stepped in back between the goal posts and caught the pigskin and ran. I think it was seventy-seven yards for a touchdown, that first time he got his hands on the ball. Michigan was the last years champion and the favorite this game, but Red Grange just ran all over them. Michigan lost the game twenty-eight to seven, I believe it was.

ES: Did you ever see him on campus? How was he treated on campus?

CM: Oh yes, I lived right across the street from the practice field. I'd go over and watch them practice. Bob Zuppke, "Little Dutchman," was the coach. I remember he was yelling at this big lineman, he said, "You couldn't block a punt if I tied you up between the goal posts!" I never will forget that. That's Bob Zuppke. Yes, I used to go over and have the chance to talk to them.

Then Red retired and I had one class with him. I had his picture and autograph, but my son liked it so much that I gave it to him, and he has it still. I am pleased about that. But the life you were asking about, my social events, that was all that happened every weekend. We'd go to Bradley Hall and dance.

ES: Did you go to any of the other dances that were held?

CM: No, that's the only thing. It's all that I could afford. It was money that was the problem.

ES: Were a lot of students in that situation?

CM: Oh everybody, everybody that I knew. Our whole group was that way. Couple of them had to drop out later on.

ES: Did they have jobs in school too, the friends that you came with from Connersville, did they work while they were at school?

CM: We had two of them that waited tables. I could have done that, but I didn't want to do that, because I didn't have the time. A lot of the kids waited tables for their food. They didn't get paid, just got to eat, but that was \$5 a week, and my meal ticket was \$5. I knew the cashier and a lot of times when I was running low, she'd blink her eye and let me get by, you know.

ES: Where did you get your food?

CM: Well, we had a little restaurant, a little cafeteria down near the campus. It was designed just for students and we'd eat at the same place all the time.

Mrs. McNaughton: Did your landlady ever treat you to a meal or—?

CM: Only once. It was on a Sunday I remember, and I had the Sunday paper. While I was out the rest of the guys tore up this big Sunday paper and just dumped it all over the floor. I went in there and took a look at it, you know, wow those crazy guys. I just took a match and threw it in on the paper, and it started blazing up. The rest of the guys were watching me to see my reaction and then they panicked. The place was burning down you see. So I rushed in with them and we stomped the fire out and everything. Then the landlady came up and she wanted to know what the noise was all about. I said, "Well, this paper here, somebody dropped a match on it and it caught fire, and I'm just helping to stomp it out." "Thank you, thank you, come down for dinner!" I saved her house. So that's the only time she invited me down.

ES: How many people lived in that house? How many roomers were there?

CM: Well let's see. In our apartment there were five and we had a little dormitory. We had no heat in the dorm. I remember I was next to the window in a double deck bed and the snow would blow in on us at night, and—

ES: I've been told that before. Why didn't you have the windows closed in the winter?

CM: Oh we liked that. I liked that because I sleep well in the cold.

Mrs. McNaughton: That's amazing that you would hear that from someone else.

ES: Oh, a couple people.

CM: Yeah we did, and the snow would come in on your bed, but we had about four, five mostly in the dorm. She had about sixteen in the house. It was a big white house that she had done over, just to take in students. We lived on Green Street about a block east of the campus.

ES: Now tell me about rules on campus. Do you remember any rules that you had to abide by?

CM: Trying to think, had no curfew.

ES: Your landlady didn't have any rules for the house?

CM: None at all for us. None at all, I don't think we had any rules that I know of. The only thing that I objected to was a clock in a nearby bell tower. The bell tower would ring every fifteen minutes at a quarter after it would ring three times; at half past, it would ring six times; at quarter til, nine times, plus the hour. At twelve it would ring twelve times, plus twelve for the hour, making it rather difficult to study with that dumb bell. A business man gave eight million dollars to Ball State to erect one here, and it's about half finished. They brought their bells from France, and one of them is six-foot which is taller than I am. Those bells are going to throw residents of a wealthy neighborhood next to the campus out of bed - they're so loud. I can only wait to see what they think of it, but I got a kick out of it.

ES: Now you said you had a car. Where did you keep that, or were there any rules about having cars?

CM: No, we kept it in the backyard of this place where we stayed, and it was no problem. We did paint it blue and trimmed it in gold, because of the colors of Illinois. And so we'd be in parades once in a while with that old thing. We had, I was trying to think, homecoming parades and all that, and I remember the Orpheum Theatre in Champaign. After a football game, the fans would go and tear it up every time. . . They'd have a huge parade. The kids would get gutter to gutter, parade to Champaign to the Orpheum, and then get in there and raise hell, is what they did. After on particular game, the fans were really rowdy. There were about six or seven blocks of marchers heading toward Champaign to celebrate. The Dean, in an open car, came upon the scene and tried to stop the madness. At every block, he would stop the parade and give a speech "Don't do this," "Go back," "You're going to get hurt," "You're just maybe going to be arrested." After each such warning the crowd would applaud, but kept going on to the Orpheum, adding students as they went. At the Theatre, the mob arrived to find policemen, arm-in-arm, lined up across the front of the building and proceeded to push them through it's plate-glass

windows. They went inside, threw out the seats and really trashed the place. The Orpheum Theatre then was our best source of entertainment. At that time, there were about six or seven acts, all from New York and all big acts in the Orpheum Circuit that appeared on their stage. The Orpheum Theatre was a “big thing” in those years and we went whenever possible.

Mrs. McNaughton: Do you remember how much you had to pay?

CM: No I don't, I don't remember. Students got a rate, but I don't remember what it was.

Mrs. McNaughton: Would it be as much as 25 cents?

CM: I don't know. But the crowd was vicious. I remember a comedian and his wife came in there from New York. They were Jewish, and their sense of humor wasn't the same ours. They'd tell a joke and instead of applauding, we would boo it. I never will forget that poor guy. He was embarrassed because his wife was trying to be funny too. He stopped the skit and said that they were from New York and two of the best rated comedians and just couldn't understand our behavior, then walked off, I'll never forget that.

Another time, I was at a circus in Champaign where the grounds were next to the railroad tracks. All the circus tents were hooked together and lined up quite close to a track where a freight train was stationed, some student hooked one of the tents to the train, and when the train pulled out, it pulled down all the tents in that whole circus. I will never forget that or, of course, the riot at the Orpheum Theatre.

ES: Do you remember freshman cap burnings? With the—

CM: No I don't remember that.

ES: What about interscholastic circus?

CM: Yeah they had one, but I don't remember, I'm blanked on all the things that you want.

ES: Oh that's fine. You were talking about the intramural sports, how did that work, that system? You said your friends—

CM: The athletic department sponsored that.

ES: I see.

CM: And we'd go over to the gym and sign up.

ES: You'd just get your own team together?

CM: Get your team and sign up, and then they'd make out the schedule out for you, and you played their schedule. But it was controlled by the fraternities, and the fraternities had all the officials. We didn't have any trouble in basketball, because we weren't even close. Indiana is known for its basketball and we gave them a lesson in that. Baseball, we should have won that,

but the official call went against us. That took a lot of our spare time (the athletic thing) going to games and so forth. That was pretty much our life.

ES: Did you stick together with these friends mainly, or did you know other people on campus?

CM: No, we stayed pretty much to ourselves, we didn't need a lot. As I was telling you earlier, I had one professor that stood out from all the others, never will forget him. He was in social studies, and he lectured not from the book but on studies that he had made, like Russia. He told a story about a Russian Czar who was about seven-foot tall, I can't think, Peter the Great, maybe, who learned that one of his deputies was "playing around" with the Czarina. In return, the Czar used his sword to cut off the culprit's head, places it on a silver platter and had it carried in to his wife. He told stories like that all through his lectures, and he'd get a standing ovation every day. Dr. Sachar [Abram L. Sachar], I think that was his name. He was lured to Chicago, as a lecturer finally, but he was the most outstanding one I had. Lets see what was the other?

For English class, I wrote a theme about the McFarlan Motor Company. At class time, before the whole room, the professor chose to read my paper. He said it was one of the very best themes in the class – really great! Then he said, "I had to give this student and 'F', because he made a comma fault." I have never forgotten that.

ES: So he gave you an F?

CM: On that theme yeah. So those are things you remember.

ES: What was the grading like? Was that true for most the professors, were they—?

CM: Some of them were narrow-minded—I thought they were, at least. Speech class, I enjoyed my speech class. We had to have five speeches prepared on interesting subjects, each requiring five minutes delivery for the final exam. I could, for the life of me, think of only three subjects that I could talk on for five minutes at quiz time. I was never was so scared in my life, because that meant my grade, and being up in front of the class. When he picked one of the five, fortunately he picked one I knew, and I got an A in that class. But I remember that class.

ES: How big were your classes?

CM: Well a social science class was about two hundred and fifty. But most of them were typically twenty or somewhere around there.

ES: For those large classes, did you have graduate students who taught the discussion sections, or did you have discussion sections?

CM: No, no, that's the way it was in Columbia, I didn't go to any classes that had less than two hundred fifty, three hundred. You had the top professors that wrote the books lecturing to you at Columbia.

ES: Well you've mentioned him, but Thomas Arkle Clark, did you remember him?

CM: No.

ES: At all? Any impressions of him? Was he the Dean you were talking about standing on the car?

CM: Yeah, yeah, he was. That's all that I knew about him. He tried to get us to stop. Yeah, Thomas Clark, that's right. Then the opening of the new stadium was a big event out there when I was there. With that fraternity sing, that was the big thing in the spring.

ES: Yeah tell me about that.

CM: All the students would bring their dates and sit on the grass in the Quad. At one end there was a large building with tall steps on either side and that led to a terrace and the doorway. The fraternities would come on at the side and go up those steps to present their songs and then we would applaud or not. You know, some of them would even boo them. We'd pretty much select the winner in that manner, but that was the biggest, "big thing" in the spring, the Spring Sing.

Mrs. McNaughton: Back at Wesleyan the fraternities would have their fraternity song and then a song that they all sang. Was it that way at Illinois, so that they had something to compare if they all...?

CM: Yeah the school song, they all had to sing the school song, plus their fraternity song. That's true, plus their own song.

ES: This was just the fraternities that were participating?

CM: That's right.

ES: I see.

CM: I think all of them did, I don't know, because it would go on just forever. But that was to me one of the big things.

ES: Was there a place that students congregated, a social—?

CM: Yeah, Bradley Hall, was about the center of social activity for the non-fraternity people, and Bradley Hall had a lot of little places around. That was the hangout.

Mrs. McNaughton: Is Bradley Hall still there, or is it—?

ES: Yes the building is.

CM: It is, right on campus?

ES: Yes, but it's not that anymore.

CM: I was trying to think of—

Mrs. McNaughton: What's it's use now?

ES: I think it's commercial, I think there's some business in it.

CM: I wish I could help you more on Illinois, but that was almost eighty years ago.

ES: Sure.

CM: And my memory is not as sharp as it should be.

ES: Well, let me ask you about national events. Did you know what was going on outside campus when you were in college? Did you keep track of events through the newspaper or—?

CM: While I was there, I forgot to tell this, I joined up for the ROTC to help get a little money you know. I joined up with the Air Corps, and this is a big one. My second year there they selected four men from each of the Big Ten schools, and sent the forty of use went to Chanute Field, which is about twenty miles north of the campus. You don't remember this, but Roosevelt was the President. He was against the military set-up, and he kept the budget way down. We didn't have any budget for the military, now this I did know.

ES: Now this is after you graduated?

CM: No, no this is '24. I was thinking about joining the Air Force, because I was running out of money, so I enlisted. Well they picked me in 1926 to go to Chanute Field to represent Illinois, and there were forty of us there. We flew old wartime Jennies, which the Air Corps had used for training purposes in World War I. We flew those everyday, and we'd fly over the campus and countryside.

START OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

INTERRUPTION.

CM: At the end of the term, after flying those things all around, I took some wonderful pictures of the campus. Anyway, they decided since the Air Force did not have a budget big enough to take us all, they would take only six of the forty, and all of us had thought that we were going to get into Air Force. They said, "Now the list will be published tomorrow on the bulletin board." When I checked, I was number seven, and I was the most disappointed guy in the world. So those six got in and I knew them all pretty well, even corresponded with them. Shortly after their induction, fliers carrying airmail on the east coast New York to Washington route, went on

strike. Well then they had to fly the mail. So these six guys were told to use the same old-fashioned open cockpit planes to fly the mail over the mountains. In six months time, all six of them were dead; that's how close I come to being in that group. So I was so disappointed, but it turned out it was a life saver for me. So that was a big event at the University of Illinois. We used to drill in the drill hall there. Is that drill hall still there, that big— ?

ES: The Armory?

CM: Armory, it's still there?

ES: Uh-huh.

CM: Then it belonged to the military, and I think they have a track in there now.

ES: Uh-huh.

CM: They still do, yeah?

INTERRUPTION.

ES: Would you talk about flying the planes for ROTC, what you did, and how you were trained?

CM: Well, we flew old wartime Jennies and they were easy to fly but they would not go very fast. When we were lined up right along next to the Pennsylvania train track, and the train would go by, we could not catch them, that's how slow we were. We'd do about seventy-five and the train was probably doing eighty. They were slow, big, boxcar planes for training. Well we went up in groups of four and flew in a "five." We were in V-formation, one and then two and two. We'd fly with five ships, and we'd go down over Champaign and come back. For the first two days, we were told to just ride. The pilot was in front, now let see, no the pilot was in back, because in case we panicked, he could knock us out. We held the joystick that would control the plane—make it go up or down. For those first two or three days, they'd have us hold it really loosely and not panic or grip it or anything, and he'd do the flying, until after he got up about 3,000 feet. We'd fly at 3,000 feet down to Champaign, and just hold that joystick for the first flight. Then the next few days we flew only after we were up. I mean, he'd give us the stick. What he told us to do was to keep the horizon level and fly straight. If the horizon went up and down, you knew you were going up and down. You were allowed to go just so fast. Your throttle was on the side and you moved it back and forth for speed.

Now an interesting story on that. The pilots loved to "hedge hop," all the farms in Illinois were framed by hedges about fifteen or twenty feet high. They would fly low (having made bets among themselves earlier), and they would hedge hop. They would come right down on the corn tops and hit the top of that hedge, and the one that would tear off the most of that and bring it back in his under carriage won the bet that day. That's what they did for fun, because they were bored, flying us old pumpkins.

One time, coming back from Champaign my pilot, he said, "Mac, I had a big night and I'm sleepy. I'm going to sleep so you take over." I said, "Okay, thank you." A short time later, I

was fighting that plane, but what I didn't know, he was deliberately turning off the gas. I didn't know that, and I was trying to fight it. All of sudden we started to dive to the ground, and I tried to wake him up, "Hey we're spinning, please!" So finally he "came to," pulled out and we landed in a pasture. That's where his girlfriend lived and she had breakfast for us, but I couldn't eat. I could *not* eat; I wasn't hungry. I never will forget that experience. Basically that was about it. Eventually we were taught to land and take off and that was the end of the course.

ES: And who were the people involved in this? You said they were, were they just Illinois students who were doing this, or—?

CM: No, no this was the Air Force, we were in the Air Force.

ES: You were just over at—

CM: And these were the regular pilots in the Air Force.

ES: Who were teaching the ROTC.

CM: They were teaching ROTC students to take us in to the Air Force, you see.

ES: And that was summer of '24?

CM: That's right, that's right.

ES: Now tell me, you graduated in 1928, did you go through Commencement?

CM: Oh yeah, I should have graduated in '27 but I waited out a year, because I started in '23. I laid out and graduated in '28 and went to work in Richmond in '28.

ES: What did you get out of your education at Illinois? Were there strengths or weaknesses that you could identify? Were you happy with your education?

CM: Well, I thought a lot of the courses for me were a waste of time, like a lot of social studies and all that stuff, but I was too practical I guess. Now the Education Department was good, they taught me what I should know, and made a good teacher out of me. So they did that. But I don't know about the Architecture School. I had only two years of that, I can't judge them really. But I did an awful lot of drawing, day and night it seemed like. I remember one professor, this girl had come up, "What do you think of this drawing, this picture?" And the professor says, "That *is* a drawing." Later he said, "I couldn't tell her, but that *is* a drawing." And I got kick out of that.

ES: Were there many women in that department?

CM: No, uh-uh, she was one of the few, and she was pretty bad. Anything else funny? The riots going into Champaign, now they were stand-outs. I think that's about all I can think of.

ES: Well thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.

INSERTION: In 1924, after the Homecoming game, there was a pep rally where Bob Zuppke was the master of ceremonies. One student asked him – “What makes Red Grange so great? He wasn’t big and he wasn’t heavy.” Bob thought a moment and said, “There are two things that make him great: number one, he carries two hundred pounds of ice up 3 flights of stairs all summer so his legs are strong and the main reason – he has big feet!”