

University of Illinois Student Life 1928-1938
Oral History Project
Austin Dyson – Class of '37
Urbana, Illinois
April 5, 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 is Austin Dyson, an alumnus from the class of 1937. We are at Mr. Dyson's home in Urbana, Illinois and the date is April 5th, 2001.

Could you state your name and birth date?

Austin Dyson: Austin Arthur Robert Dyson. I was born July the 20th, 1915. So I'm what, 85, I'll be 86 this year in July. I was born on farm on the west side of Route 45 not too far from Frasca Airport out there. I used to show the kids that when we drove down from Oak Park. I'd say, "Here's where I was born." They say that the house is torn down now and the highway goes right over it. But the west side, that's where I was born. Anyway, so Dad had a dairy farm later, just east of Urbana. Then in 1919, in January, he had a sale and moved to town. So he was like a laborer and in 1919, the 20s, an operating engineer. He'd run hoists and cement mixers and things like that. He did that up until up to about '28 or '29, until everything stopped in Urbana, for about five years I don't think he had a job.

ES: What did he do?

AD: Well, Mother was doing laundry, so we did laundry mainly, like sheets and linens for the Davenport House. I don't know if it's still there, it used to be. It's right there where the old Union used to be, next to it practically. So that's where I grew up. Then I went to school here, all through school. Then I got through high school. Then I went to college. I didn't have a job. I started caddying when I was nine years old. I only caddied once or twice. I caddied for a lady, she felt so sorry for me. I was a little bitty skinny boy. I was just so skinny and these four clubs didn't weigh anything at all, but I think it bothered her so she quit after nine holes [laughter]. I wish I could recall her name because her husband was a very famous professor.

ES: Where was that?

AD: Right here in Urbana at the Urbana Country Club. So I really started caddying in earnest then the next year. My next door neighbor had gone out when I was nine and made fifty cents and I thought, "Wow." So the next year I went out. He became the pro out there in time and then he became president of the Professional Golfer's Association. I've seen him give the green jackets at the Master's, you know. He was best man at our wedding.

ES: What was his name?

AD: Lewis Strong. Then as I say I caddied. I've known President Daniels, and I've known everyone since he.

ES: You have?

AD: Oh yeah, I've met them all. Caddied for them or something or other. Like Willard, President Willard I know, and he was president when I graduated. Lloyd Morey, he was Comptroller and I think that he became president temporarily, I think, for a little time. I used his golf clubs when I was a little boy [*laughter*]. We had a caddy tournament and you'd borrow clubs from a member if you could find a member willing to do it, so that's what I did. One thing, in those days they had a sand box they called it and a water bucket. A guy would dip his ball in the water and then the sand and then rinse it off a little bit. Well to figure out whose turn it was, to tee off, next on busy days like Sundays, you'd take that ball and you'd put it in a trough, a metal pipe just big enough for the ball to run down to the end. It had a cut out, and whose ball was down there was the next foursome up. Well sometimes in washing the ball you wouldn't get all the sand off and that sand would accumulate in there. Well someone put a ball in there one day and it got stuck half way down. They were pounding the thing trying to get it out. I was just a boy then, about 10, between 10 and 12 at the time.

Professor Leutwiler [Oscar Adolph Leutwiler] I think was the head of the Mechanical Engineering department at that time. His son became the first chief you know. I said, "Why don't we just pour a little water down there and wash it out." They did that and everything turned out rosy. He was standing there and heard my comment. When I was graduating from high school, he called my next door neighbor who was working for him over in the lab, in the machine shop. They had a machine shop then pouring aluminum and metal and made molds and all kind of stuff and cut out various tools. He asked him if I was going to school and he didn't know, so he told him to find out. Anyway, I think he either came over or he himself called the high school and they had my credits sent over. But, he said anyone smart enough to pour a little water down there and get the sand out ought to go to school. I think that's a pretty interesting little story of a man that's pretty well known and famous.

ES: Is that why you went to the U of I?

AD: Well, I may not have registered, if you know what I mean? It cost a little bit to go to school, but not much really. I had been saving money though as a caddy and I had enough for the first year of tuition at least, \$25 or \$35. It was \$25 the first semester and then it went up to \$35 and I know it was \$35 the rest of my years a semester. I had saved that much caddying. But it took most of my summers to make that.

ES: Were you saving to go to college?

AD: Oh yes. I was saving anyway.

ES: Was education important to your parents?

AD: Well, my mother really I think would have loved to go on and all that, but she only went through the eighth grade basically, out at Perkin's school. And Dad, actually he only had a fifth

grade education. He moved from the school north on Lincoln Avenue. The school's still there. Some one lives there now. They moved to a place near here towards Philo. When they went to school there they moved him back three or four grades, and he didn't want to go back to fifth grade, so he told his daddy that he was going to quit. He said that if he was going to quit he was going to work, so that's why he worked on the farm and that sort of thing until they moved to town in 1919.

ES: Do you think they wanted you to go to school, to college?

AD: I think so. I think Mother did at least. Well I think she did, yes.

ES: Did you have brothers and sisters?

AD: Oh yes, I had two older sisters and one younger.

ES: Did they go on to college?

AD: No, neither older sister did. I don't believe the youngest one did. The oldest sister worked at the Five and Dime store. One went to like a business school. She had a job with the city clerk down in Urbana, that one sister. The youngest sister, oh, she worked for Dean Maria Leonard. That's what she did, until she got married. I remember that now.

ES: After she graduated from college?

AD: No, high school. Then she took a business course, I think she probably did. I was the man that came to dinner as far as she was concerned. When I was a senior, when I was going to college she was just starting first grade. Fifteen years difference in us, the youngest sister. She said that to her I was the man who came to dinner once in a while. I was gone all the time practically.

ES: Tell me how the Depression affected your family in the late 20s and early 30s?

AD: Well, like I said, Mother had to do the laundry business. I had to pick it up or deliver it. I even learned to run the mangle myself and iron the sheets and table linens and that sort of thing. We even bought a mangle – a lot easier than the iron. We'd work practically every day of the week doing that. Dad helped doing that too. He had no work doing what he was, an operating engineer. Sometimes too, it was pretty tough. If you did get a job, through a business agent, then you might get laid-off in a hurry if you didn't pay off your business agent. You had to give five percent or more to these business agents. And the local one we had here, he ended up in prison all right. He pulled that on the wrong man on a job down in Jappa. () He ended up in prison, up in Joliet. Dad liked the guy, but he was cheating really and gypping, that's what it amounted to.

ES: Did people have a hard time during that time in Champaign-Urbana?

AD: Well, yes they did have, unless you had a job. You could go down and get like food once in a while. I don't know where it was. I don't imagine there were too many people here than necessary. Like people come in today probably look for something – you stayed where you were unless there was something worth coming in for. That's what it amounted to. A lot of people moved in with other people and they'd rent out their houses. They'd be lucky to rent out their houses. I suppose even in those days they had people coming and going in the University. The ones that I know were basically there all the time.

ES: What year did you start school?

AD: I started in college—fall of '33. Then I graduated in '37.

ES: What did you major in?

AD: Electrical Engineering.

ES: How did you choose that field?

AD: I just figured that I'd rather get Engineering than Liberal Arts where you had to do so much reading. I could do math and all that stuff pretty easy, so I chose that route. I or my mother knew of someone who was an engineer who was making \$400 a month and I thought, "Boy, if I could be making \$400 a month, that would be something." I thought, well, I might as well go that route. The fact is, when I started out to work, I got something like \$127.50 a month, I think it was, and I got \$5 more than what they were giving to most graduates at that time. The fact is, at Alice Chalmers up in Milwaukee, they were only giving \$88 I think, to beginning engineers.

ES: Did you have a hard time finding a job?

AD: Well, I think there was a little let up and some hiring done in '37. I didn't get a job until just before school was out. I went up to Chicago and I had an interview in June, I think it was. It was early June because I graduated in June, 13th or somewhere in there. And then, I got this job but I couldn't start to work there until July 1st because I had to go to ROTC camp for two weeks. So right after school I left and I went to Custer again for two weeks and I stopped off there, in fact, on my way home. I had my bag and I found a place to rent. They took me out to someone's house and I got a room and that was it. I started working before I could return home.

ES: Tell me about the mechanical engineering department? Did you have favorite professors in that field? What did you have to take?

AD: I didn't have Mr. Leutwiler personally. I just knew him from the country club. Of course I had Abner Knight, Professor Knight. His daughter [Betty Ann Knight] was in my class in high school. I started to say Betty Lee. I think her daddy kept her out of school one year after high school because she was pretty young. I think she was younger than us by a year but she graduated with us. She has an award she gives every year honoring her father, Betty Ann, did I say Betty Ann?

ES: Oh sure, Betty Ann Knight.

AD: I started to say Betty Lee, because that's my wife's sister's name. So anyway, he was actually probably a favorite among everybody. And I had a fellow named Kreuger [P. Gerold Kreuger] that I sort of liked, he was in the early years. He was a physicist. Back in '33, he was telling us how to make an atom bomb, you know that. You think it didn't happen until World War II, but they knew the possibilities and how to do it and discussing it even way back then. He made what they call a betatron and cyclotron, one of the first ones right over here. It wasn't a real big thing like that have at Batavia, but that was something. In math I had, I think his name was Bergoyne. He was in math and he was quite a comic [*laughter*]. I forget the one I had in analytical geometry. There's an interesting story that I might tell you on that one. He gave us a problem and the day that we had to have the answer I didn't go to class because I had a little diarrhea. I'd stop at the library and I had to go so I thought, "Oh boy," so I didn't go to class. Well, no one had the answer so he wouldn't give them the answer until he found out if I had it. He called home and my mother answered the phone and of course I wasn't home. My mother gets on the phone and wonders where I'd been. I had the answer on that. I found some of those things pretty easy. In my first year especially because we had many of the things over here at Urbana High School and used the same books. We just went a little bit farther and little bit faster over here.

ES: So you felt prepared for when you went off. . . .

AD: That's right, prepared for it at Urbana High School. I had pretty good teachers there at Urbana High School.

ES: Did you know your professors very well? Did you see them outside the classroom or socialize with them at all?

AD: No, no I didn't. I went to class and I went home, that type of thing. I wasn't quite the party animal as the kids and my wife was. In those days, like I say, the cost of going to some of these things was fairly expensive in a lot of respects so I didn't even consider going. When I had time, I'd go out and caddy or whatever and made whatever I could. I worked in a pro shop in fact my junior and senior year, perhaps even my sophomore year.

ES: Where was that?

AD: At the Urbana Country Club.

ES: At the Urbana Country Club you worked in the shop?

AD: Uh-huh. Caddy master, or whatever you want to call it. I'd shine clubs, wrap clubs, reshaft clubs. They had wooden shaft clubs back in those days. Steel shafts came in, in that period, and that type thing. I could do a pretty good job, on reshafting clubs, wrapping, and such.

ES: How much time do you think you spent working when you were in college? Working at—

AD: If the weather wasn't bad I was usually out there or studying. We only had a two bedroom house and I had three sisters and a mother and dad, and that was six of us. I had an aunt that lived with us, she was blind so she had to live with someone. Then we had an uncle come and we had to find another bed. The neighbor lady across the street allowed me to come and gave me the whole bedroom upstairs with a desk and all up there and everything. So I could sit up there and that's where I did my studying most of the time. Her name was Bossert. So that's where I did most of my studying, practically all my studying if I did anything at home, because I never did any at home, I was always over there.

ES: Did you finance your education through these jobs or did your parents help you with tuition?

AD: No, I think most of it was out of my caddy money. Then as a junior, I went over to register and a guy, cadet officer, came up to me and asked if I wanted to sign up for advanced ROTC. I thought, "Oh no, I'm not going to sign up for that." (You had to take two years, as freshmen and sophomores. That's why a lot of people avoided coming here their first two years because they didn't want to take ROTC. So they came here as juniors and seniors, basically juniors, from other colleges.) So I told him no one had asked me to. I thought maybe the commanding officers had to see what you did as a freshmen and sophomore to see if you might be made of the material they wanted and then they accepted you. That's what I thought that you had to be asked. He said, "Oh no, are you taking that class there?" I had signed up for a class. He said, "Oh no, you're an electrical engineer, you have to sign up for signal corp." The captain of the signal corp came over, and this was Captain Stice of the regular Army assigned as PMST (Professor of Military Science and Tactics) at Illinois. He came over and he invited me to come into advance ROTC. So I signed up in the signal corp. I was too dumb to know that you could sign up for anything that you wanted to *[laughter]*.

ES: What kind of time commitment was that?

AD: That was three days at least. At least Monday, Wednesday, and Friday was the rule. And usually two hours at a time. They usually had a retreat on Friday in the Armory and when it was nice it would be outside. Everybody would march and it drew big crowds. Big crowds would come and watch the parades on "Military Day" as they called it.

ES: And that was Friday every week?

AD: That would be Friday only. Oh, Military Day was only about once in May, before graduation. They had outside guests like governors, someone like that would be there, and that type of thing. I don't know if the President was ever there, I don't think so, but something like the vice-president or a secretary or something like that would sometimes be there.

ES: Tell me about the rules on campus? Do you remember the student rules?

AD: Well, I don't remember many. I lived at home. . . You couldn't smoke on campus.

ES: Did a lot of students smoke?

AD: Oh, yes I guess they did some. I didn't notice so much. They'd go off campus, they'd go across the street there not Wright Street, Gregory, not Gregory, just about the first place they could from the main campus and they'd smoke here and there. That was one thing. And you couldn't have an automobile on campus. Being as I lived here and had a car available I got a permit. You had to get a permit. It was a little round steel tag and you put it in your license plate, so I had a permit to drive. In a way, that's how I got started really socializing because I signed up for advance ROTC in '35, and then in the spring of '36 they, some of my classmates, started asking me if I was going to the Military Ball. I said, "Oh no, I'm not going to go to the Military Ball." I didn't know anyone, hardly. I had taken a girl that lived next door to a ball in December of '35. It was cold in that gym annex, what is now the old Kenney Gym. It was real cold night in February, and it was cold in there, I'm telling you. She said she had a good time [laughter].

Anyway, as I say that was one of the few times. The guys pestered me and I said, "Well, no, I don't believe so." One guy said, "Now listen, an officer and a gentleman has to take a lady to the dance, that's part of your duties as an officer, you have to do that. So anyway, the main reason they wanted me is so I could take them and taxi them around. I decided, "I guess I will go."

In my Rosemary, High School yearbook, I looked up three girls. A prelude to that, I might say, in '35 I was going out to the Armory. I was carrying my drawing board and my T-square, a book or two, and that. I think I had on my military clothes, not my officer clothes. I was the only one on the Broadwalk going that way. Then here comes a girl from the library coming down the Broadwalk in a beautiful red dress. That's when the song, "The Lady in Red" was so popular, I don't know if you've ever heard it. She comes down here and as she gets closer I see its Elaine [Hood.] I hadn't seen her since our graduation night in high school. I assumed that she was going away to school because I heard the girls talking in the gym that night about going away to school. It turned out that it was her friend Betty, who I'm going to see tonight and her husband and we're going out for pizza. Anyway, she was coming along and I said hello and she said hello. I was on one side of the side walk and she was on the other side. I said, "I thought you were going away to school or are you going to school here?" She said, "Obviously I am." Well, she could have been visiting for all I know [laughter]. There wasn't much more said and I went on and she went the other way.

The next spring I happened to think of her and I got my Rosemary book and I picked her and two other girls. I said, well I'll ask 3 girls, if none of the three had said yes, I was just not going to bother getting a ticket and that. So I called her up and what do you think happened? She accepted. Years later, when we told the story, she said she couldn't think of a reason not to [laughter].

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AD: In my Xerox [of his diary] from that day, the first day that I called her – and from several pages from her diary and mine, you can compare what she said and I said about various things that happened. So if you want to you can take those with you and see. Each date in Elaine's diary shows entries from '33, '34, '35, '36 and '37.

ES: So did you have a good time at the ball?

AD: Oh yes. What I did, the Engineers were having a Ball on Friday one week before the Military Ball. So I called her on Tuesday before the Engineer's Ball. What my real thought was that if I got along with this girl alright and if she can put up with me I'll ask you to the Military Ball. This was a test run. I'm telling you, I wasn't very good. I went to one of my sister's friends and I saw them on a Wednesday night or on Thursday and they showed me a few steps to practice, so they helped me out a little. Whatever I did, she could follow perfectly. She was a great dancer. I didn't even step on her once or anything like that. Then as we were going home I asked her, "How would you like to go to the Military Ball?" "Oh, yes," she would be glad to go to the Military Ball.

Now if you read the diaries, you'll see that night she says, "Austin Dyson," she hardly ever used two names, only the very first time and that was the first time. "Austin Dyson called and asked me to go to the Engineers St. Pat's Ball!" And she put an exclamation mark. "Surprise." And she underlined that. She was surprised to hear from me. As seniors in high school we were lab partners once in a physics class. She probably remembers me from there. The only classes we were in together in high school were algebra as freshmen and then physics as a senior. Outside of that I didn't see much of her. I guess she had to work that date in because she went to the movies the night before with a guy and then she had to go to a formal dance the next night [*laughter*]. Then on Sunday she wrote, "I'm tired," in her book.

ES: So this was when you were a Junior? Your Junior year?

AD: Junior year. In my book I write, "I called Elaine Hood," used both names, "And asked her to go to the St. Pat's Ball." Then the next line I write, "She accepted." So it surprised me too. She had her mind on the Military Ball because she had been to the Military Ball the year before. It was one of the more elite, social events of the year. One of the bigger events of the year was the Military Ball. The chances of going are slimmer because there are only so many men in ROTC.

ES: Were dances important to student life?

AD: Oh yes. I think so. You had all kinds. You'd find out that she danced two or three times a week. Fraternities might have a dance on a Tuesday or a Wednesday. Most of the big dances would be on a Friday. Then there would be something on a Saturday, and that type of thing. There were a lot of dances and that type of thing on the campus.

ES: What other kinds of things did people do? Were they involved in the religious foundations at all? Were those a big—?

AD: I don't know myself. I went to church and I was baptized as a little boy. When I started as a caddy, you make your most money on a Sunday so I got away from going. And she got away, her parents never made her go to church. But, she gravitated in a way because two of her friends, she would go to church with them. And, some were Catholic and some were others and she would go with whenever they would go. She would say, "delightful service," or something.

She was very aware of what was going on. She was very logical. Her daddy taught logic, you know [*laughter*]. She had an awful lot of common sense, I'm telling you.

ES: What other things did you do for fun?

AD: Well swimming, and she loved to ice skate. Ice skate, you know at the rink. It was built, I think that was available before we started school there. She loved to ice skate so she'd go over there. I'm telling you it was cold weather and she'd walk from her house over there and that was more than a mile. It was more than a mile or so from where she lived over to that ice rink. It might be zero weather, but for skating she could do it. We didn't skate too often together, but she did with a lot of different people. I had my skates, but I used to skate at the lake because I lived about the equivalent of two blocks away from the lake so I'd go down to the skate. But for her that would be a mile and a half walk down to the lake and against the wind most of the time too. So she liked that.

I went to a lot of movies. Way more movies than she did. You ought to see my book, there's a lot of movies that I went to in the evenings. And of course, I played golf whenever I could, whenever they let me; I played golf. I wrote something in my diary for a friend of mine. His brother was killed in the War. And I had missed his brother. So I found a couple of entries in my diary. I might Xerox them for you if you wanted. We played on January 25th, 1935, '34 or 5, I forget. "On January the 25th I played with him two holes." And, I said I had to quit because I had to come and register for second semester registration. So I played an awful lot of golf, with the members to boot.

ES: Where did you meet your friends? Did you meet them in your classes or did you have friends from town?

AD: You mean in college?

ES: In college, right.

AD: Well, some in college naturally. And, a lot of the guys I knew here went to school, but I don't recall hardly seeing them ever on campus. In fact I have an entry in my diary about George. He had coffee with me yesterday. I gave it to and asked, "Do you remember this?" It was in December. Late December, it was about '34. It was George Gladding. It said, "George Gladding was not in the physics lecture this morning so I probably won't see him again for a long time again. We usually discuss the events of the day and what's going on on the campus as he walks to his house and I cut north and go to my house." I gave it to him and he can't recall it. You know, I can't recall it either, ever being in that class together.

His sister has got an honorary thing over here in Gregory Hall named after her and her husband. She was the valedictorian of her class and all that. I said, "What happened to you George?" He said, "Well, she had to work for it." And there's going to be another big award here honoring her and her husband. I can't think, what is it called? I just got the thing from the University yesterday. I can show you that later. They donated to Communications.

ES: What are their names?

AD: Her name was Maxine Gladding Greenwood. Greenwood was her married name.

ES: Now when you were in school you lived at home to save money?

AD: Oh yes.

ES: Where did your family live again?

AD: 809 N. Coler. Right across from the Fairgrounds. At that time it was at the end of the concrete steel and the beginning of the cinders, going out towards the cemetery.

ES: How did you get into school every day?

AD: Walked. Oh yes. It was two miles out to the Armory. Some times it was pretty cold.

ES: Did you spend a lot of time on campus outside of classes?

AD: I think I spent more than I thought I did. I don't think I ate hardly any on the campus, but I found out that I did eat lunch at a spot or two, basically on a account of the cold and time. I was taking about 20 hours, you know, and in Engineering you had three or four hour labs a couple of times a week and then you had class all morning. And the military you really had it. So you didn't have a lot of time really. It's almost like going to high school you might say because there wasn't a whole lot of time available.

ES: Did the friends you had at Urbana High School that went to the U of I, did they live mainly at home too?

AD: Oh yes. My one friend I just told you about, that year he moved one place and then he moved another place. He was from Hoopeston and he even went to high school here by staying at people's home.

ES: I wondered if that was a way that people saved money?

AD: Well partly and that was the way a lot of kids were able to come to school. Like her [Elaine], one of her best friends, she lived with her aunt. I don't know what little town she came from around here, and even roomed one year with her. There were four girls and a mother and a father and they always had one room rented out to someone. The, Mr. and Mrs. Phipps were the name. At the school in Charleston, he became a professor there. He was honored by naming a new auditorium after him. I've met them, but I didn't meet him. I guess I might have. I came back here in '78 since I retired and I've been here since the last of '78. So we go down there and visit her.

ES: So your wife lived in town with her family and stayed at home and they rented rooms out to students?

AD: Yes. She rushed quite a bit and went to all those things and she really wanted to do that. Her parents said no because they didn't have enough money to do that. He wasn't a professor yet then, but he worked for the University in the High School Accrediting department. He went around to accredit high schools. Then he became a full professor. She really wanted to but her parent said no. One of the reasons—

ES: Did you ever want to join a fraternity?

AD: I guess I didn't give it too much thought, basically on account of the cost. I did join one of the military things later you know but that's guys that you're working with every day anyway.

ES: What did you think of the Greek system on campus?

AD: Well, to me they were just like I was as far as I was concerned.

ES: You didn't have much contact?

AD: I didn't have that much contact or if I did they were just like me. I was just going here to study. I don't think of anything, special thing. Some of my friends I guess joined a fraternity or two, I don't know which ones now. I didn't see them much after high school. I've seen some of these guys more since high school after retiring. We have a good time every time we get together.

ES: Did you go to sporting events? Was that important?

AD: Nope, I was too dignified. When I was in grade school and in high school I would go sneak into the football games and things like that, or beg a ticket. I remember a guy was scalping tickets for the Army game back in '28 or '29, somewhere back in there. I was too dumb to know that he was selling the tickets for extra. I said, "Give me one." He said, "Get away boy." "Give me one." "Get away boy." So I just stood there, finally he gave me a ticket just to get rid of me [*laughter*]. I saw that Illinois boy intercept a lateral pass and go all the way to the touch down that won the game really. I thought, I would be too dignified to beg to get in or try and sneak in. I don't think I went to many sporting events.

ES: Were they expensive? Was it a cost thing?

AD: It was about \$3 at least. \$3! It would take me a week or more to make that money, two weeks maybe. Oh yes, it wasn't about the money. ROTC, they did give you some money at the end of the year. I don't know the equivalent, but about \$10 a month maybe, almost that much you see. I think you had to buy a uniform to boot. There was some money from that.

ES: Did students talk about the Depression at all or going through hard times?

AD: Not on the side or anything or in class, I don't think so. If you were there you were there to study and learn what you could. I can tell you, I was asked once about the professors. Like Seely [Fred B.], Mr. Seely, he had a couple of sons a couple of years older than I. He wrote a

book on theoretical and applied mechanics, one of the books we used. During World War II, I was over in China. I met a fellow from Texas, what is it?

ES: Texas A & M?

AD: Yes, A & M, agricultural and mechanical. I happened to meet this guy over there – he was a captain. He asked me where I was from, “Illinois.” He asked where I went to school, “Illinois.” “Illinois! Why I don’t know anything good that come out of Illinois. Except maybe a book written by a Mr. Seely.” So that’s what was used down there in their school for the same courses. That was his way of complimenting actually. It’s amazing that all around the world you’re known by someone.

ES: Did you ever consider going somewhere else to college?

AD: On no. I didn’t think about it. Even if I had the money, I didn’t really think about it at the time. Growing up here and Illinois getting a lot of fame and Red Grange just a few years before.

ES: Do you remember that?

AD: Not much, I saw him play.

ES: Did you?

AD: Once or twice. The first game of the year they used to let the school kids in free. I don’t know if they gave you a ticket or if they marched you over, I forget which. You had a ticket and you’d go in free. Of course it was these little schools for practice. Zuppke didn’t even put Grange in that game. Illinois was ahead 63 to nothing. The kids all started yelling, “We want Grange! We want Grange!” So what does old Zuppke do? So Zuppke runs him out on the field. The other team had the ball so he put him in the backfield, so he figures that there’s no way that he’s going to get hurt in that game. What happened, this guy hit the line and the ball went flying over the line towards Grange. Grange runs and dives for that ball and one of their men dive for the ball. Zuppke took him out after that [*laughter*]. He wasn’t hurt, but the point is that he didn’t want to hurt him there. He wanted to save him for the big games. Now a days, they play all they can to get all the yards they can and get all the touchdowns you can, hoping that will help them when they try and negotiate.

ES: I wanted to ask you too about Fred Turner, do you remember him as the Dean of Men?

AD: Yes, I sat next to him at a Phi Eta Sigma initiation. I made Phi Eta Sigma as a freshmen, that’s the freshmen honorary society. The interesting thing there was, a friend of mine was a barber in town. He was a barber in Urbana. He loved to talk, naturally. We go to this meeting and they’re nominating officers and they wanted somebody for treasurer. No one nominated anyone. This guy, not knowing anyone but me, he got up and he nominated me for treasurer for Phi Eta Sigma. Of course, I got the job because nobody else wanted it; that guy was something. That guy loved to talk. So then the next year when they initiated the new one, I was at the

speakers table with Turner. I've got it in my book. I've also got a line in it, "I wasn't among those honored this year!" I made it as a freshmen but that was it. I think I was lucky to get through in some respects. Although I did get a C or better in everything I think, even in the tough things later, you know.

ES: What were students' impressions of Turner?

AD: Oh, I think they liked him. I didn't know much about him and I didn't have much contact with any of these people. I went in there once about getting a job because I wanted to get one of those 35 cents an hour jobs. I was never given one, mainly because I lived here, I think. They favored people from out of town who were working their way through, you know. It would have been money in my pocket in a way.

ES: Did a lot of students work when they were in school?

AD: Oh I think quite a bit. Some of them worked for their meals, that type of thing. I don't know what else was available. Meals and janitorial work I think was most of it. Well, like my wife, she got a job. She got a job in the library, the main library. I forget what department it was. You come in that South door, the door on the south entrance. I don't know it was either Education or Commerce in that area at the time. Now you can't even go in that door, you have to go around.

ES: She was a local person but they gave her the job?

AD: Of course, her dad was in the high school business so he was gone most of the time. But still he was part of the University's function. Whether she knew the lady, Ms. Tod was her name, the main librarian, but at least she was the one that did the hiring and firing there.

ES: Were students involved in political activities on campus?

AD: Not to my knowledge per se. The fact is, I don't think they had a lot people who were running for President or whatever come on campus to lecture, not until I was out of school.

ES: Were they involved in campus politics, student government, that kind of thing? Was that a big thing to do?

AD: Oh yes, they must have had some, but I wasn't too involved. Now Elaine was involved in the Women's Group Society, they called it. I don't know if they still have that type of thing or not. She made Torch, that's what they called it. I don't know if they have that anymore or not. That was sort of an honorary thing. You can see when she made it she was delighted, she put three exclamation marks after it, "I made Torch!!!" then 3 exclamation points. She was really happy about that.

ES: Were you aware of things going on outside of the University – national events? Did you keep in touch?

AD: Quite a bit. Partly, when I was out at the golf course caddying, I would be with business people and lawyers and things like that. I knew quite bit of things. I remember, one thing I had in my diary. I think when Roosevelt was elected President, I listened to a speech by Roosevelt, I said, "it sounded pretty good. I think I might even vote for him if I can vote. Although I'm a Republican, or supposed to be, at least my folks are at least." You kind of grew up around one thing. He made a lot of good speeches really. The next time he ran I didn't get to vote because I had moved in October from one side of the street really to the other side, but the precinct changed and I didn't know that it changed on that one side of the street, although the voting place was on that side of the street. An election judge I knew and was a democrat thought I might vote different than he wanted, so he challenged my address. () I had him take me down to the Court House and made him show me the law and everything else, the election judges and that. I hadn't registered or re-registered. I don't think there's enough time anyway from October to November you know.

ES: Do you remember peace movements, protests or anything? Radical students during the mid-30s?

AD: No.

ES: Did you go through Commencement ceremonies when you graduated?

AD: Oh yes, oh yes.

ES: Was that an important thing to do?

AD: Why yes, it was important to do I thought. I don't know whether I heard everything they said, but I got the newspaper article, right here somewhere. I know where I've got it, I've got the newspaper for that day. [President Willard's entire speech was printed in the paper.]

ES: Did your parents come?

AD: I think they did, I'm not positive though. But, I think they did. My junior year, being in ROTC, the officers in ROTC put on your dress uniforms and you led each group in. You'd led each group in, you led them down the street and you'd march them in and you'd sit them in the old gymnasium. Not the old one, Huff Gym, it's older now. You sat with them and then when they called their names you got up with them and went out with them and marched them out. I don't know if they still do that or not. But that's what they did, march each group, LAS, Engineering, all the groups had an officer assigned to them. I know one cute little girl saw me, one day, over there looking in the photographer's window and she said, "Where are you?" I said, "Here I am, I'm over here." She said, "Ok," so she knew where to look for herself [laughter].

ES: You've mentioned this before, but where was the first place you worked after you graduated from college?

AD: I worked for Public Service Company of Northern Illinois, it was called. Commonwealth Edison was in city of Chicago and northern Illinois surrounded them, Western United out in Aurora and the Fox Valley. Then Illinois Northern was out in the Dixon area. They all united as time went by and became one company.

ES: So you used your degree?

AD: Oh yeah, quite a bit. I didn't really need it for the work I did when I first started, but my theoretical knowledge made it a lot better. Then what they did, they hired guys and they put them in as just sub station operators. Some of our best testing men they had laid them off they called back as sub-station operators. Years later, a lot of these pump stations became automatic, you know. So when I told Dean Jordan I had a job and what I was going to do, he said, "That's got to be going out of business isn't it? It's all going automatic, they won't need you." [Automation was years later.]

START OF TAPE 2 SIDE A

AD: Ready? The summer of 1936 was a very hot summer. So here I notice [referring to the diary], I was up at Camp Custer in Michigan for ROTC. Elaine was here so tired, she said that she about to sleep in class. Mr. Hill didn't show up to class or Mr. Hill dismissed class, that was some art class she was taking, he dismissed class because it was so hot. Later she said that it was 100 degrees at 6 o'clock. That was July the 6th 1936. The next day was still hot, "It still is hot. No studying in this weather," she said. They went swimming at the men's new gym. That was the next day, the 7th. Really great, "Dick came to get us and we drove around." The next day, "Just another hot day, and work tonight. Russell came for me and take me and Helen and we went riding." Then she's got another real hot one here. "No let up this week." That was the 9th. "No let up this week, it's dreadful. People take their blankets and go to the stadium at night. We sleep on the floor." That's at home, "June and I and Margaret went swimming." Several girls went swimming that night. I think the next day I find out that she had moved from the upstairs to the downstairs to the basement. I think they had gone out to a dance on the roof (Robeson's Roof) that night, it was pretty good apparently. "I had a good time anyway."

ES: So she took summer school classes, is that right?

AD: She was taking summer school at the time. I think something like art and something else that she was taking. It was long and hot and she mentioned once that it was 107 somewhere that she was. The fact is, I know my diary is a little bit smeared and I wrote on the next page I laid my hand down and because it was damp the ink smeared.

ES: Could you tell me about Interscholastic Circus?

AD: Oh well, that was an event they held at the Armory, and a lot of people attended it, outsiders and students. A lot of students were involved in it. The thing I remember is that some fellows...I took gymnastics that particular year, so I was in just a pyramid I think. I might have done a little bit on the flying trapeze just as a little extra warm up. I was pretty good at doing things like that. Then I was in a big pyramid that they formed, a real tall pyramid. A couple of

my friends were catchers, Woltanski [T. L. Woltanski] and Martan, the guys that fly back and forth, with the greatest of ease they catch them. It was a good show. I remember doing it one year. And the fact is, my friend Eddie Hong [E. Hong] who was just a little fellow, Chinese-American, very short. Then there was Roughy Silverstein [R. S. Silverstein]. Now he was the Big Ten Champion wrestler in the heavy-weight. He only weighted 175 pounds. He won an inter-collegic championship even as a heavy-weight. He and Eddie had a wrestling match then at the circus. That made a circus in itself, that little-bitty guy and this big old guy. He wasn't so much big, 175 pounds, but he was broad and powerful.

ES: Who put the event on?

AD: I guess the University just did. Probably the Physical department, you know. I'm trying to remember the name of the man. I can see him playing golf just as plain as can be. He always wore t-shirt and his big muscles showed. He wasn't that good of a golfer. So, I hesitate to say his name. I think it begins with a "J," but I don't know. [Possibly Chester Oscar Jackson, Assoc. Professor in P.E. for Men, or Jerome Joseph Jordan, Instr. in P.E. for Men; Asst. to Dir. of School of P.E.] I suppose that department put it on. [I'm positive it was Jackson as I remember it started with a "J."]

ES: Did you train?

AD: Just. . . .We practiced a little bit before. I think it was before the main show I was on the flying rings and that kind of thing, and the catchers did some warming up.

ES: Was it once a year?

AD: Yeah, just once. After one year in athletics, I mean PE, then I passed two things by proficiency so therefore I wasn't involved in it anymore. They had it more than once. [I attended it as a junior I know.]

ES: Do you remember many Chinese students on campus?

AD: Well, Eddie as one and his brother makes two. We were quite friendly because he lived halfway to school. Then I picked him up and we went the rest of the way. Of course we were in various classes together. He took engineering. He graduated in EE also; I think he studied law later.

ES: What about black students?

AD: Well, we always had black students. Every year from first grade up I always had black students in my class. One or sometimes more, sometimes only one. And, I think in college, in engineering there was only one I know of. We were lab partners many of times. His name was Nesbitt [Russell Nesbitt]. I forget his first name, I'd have to look it up. He was a good student. I remember meeting him up in Chicago one day in front of the Art Institute. He and I were up there, after I think I was married, and just happened into him. I spoke to him, but he seemed to

have something else on his mind and he wanted to go somewhere so we really never did get together. I never did write to anyone hardly, you know what I mean—a lot of my friends.

ES: Did black and white students socialize?

AD: Why yes, I went to the dance that Fletcher Henderson played at the ice rink. There were two or three couples at least there. I say two or three because I don't suppose there were too many black couples then, as I remember.

ES: Were you aware of discrimination on campus?

AD: No, not really. Really, I learned afterwards that some of them might have trouble at the barber shop or something.

ES: Did you notice that growing up in Champaign-Urbana too?

AD: No. This one girl, she sat right next to me in grade school for a few classes. The names lined up. She was the next door neighbor to my aunt. She lived right next door to her on Park Street here, not too far from Carle Hospital, where it is today. The house is gone now, both houses are. Her name was Margarete Milan. I don't know what happened to her. I think in 8th grade she must have moved somewhere, her parents, because she wasn't in school. Same thing as another girl, a white girl, she stopped after 6th grade. That was for another reason, I think she became pregnant and had a baby. I remember, I thought, "my goodness a seventh grade girl with a little baby. Man!" I didn't think I'd want to be that responsible. That might be another reason that you didn't date maybe as much. You had a little bit different sense of responsibility maybe.

ES: You think in college you didn't date as much?

AD: No, not entirely that at all. I mean in the earlier days I didn't get involved with anyone. But after you get going, you get hooked [*laughter*].

ES: Were there many Jewish students on campus?

AD: Oh yes. My other lab partner was a Jew. Didn't know it until someone made a snide remark at him. I had no idea he was. I know there were at least three or more, that I can think of, that were in engineering. In fact, one of them had to change his name to get a job. That's what surprised me. He got a job with RCA, and yet the head of RCA was a Jew, if I remember right. But apparently he thought he had a better chance changing his name slightly so it wouldn't sound Jewish. It's just like a Polish friend of mine. I met him on an El-train coming out of Chicago years later. I happened to see him and it was as crowded as can be during rush hour. I said "Zowie," I called him Zowie. "Hi Zowie!" He looked at me so strange and I said, "You are Zowastanowitz aren't you?" He got close to me and said, "I changed my name, to Wist." He had to do that to get a job with National Accelerator, not National Accelerator, the one that does testing and all kind of materials and lamps and things for safety and that type of thing. I can't recall the name. He got a job with them. I thought up there was so many different nationalities, but maybe to get certain positions he probably thought he had to change his name.

ES: Did Jewish students have a problem on campus?

AD: I don't think so. Not to my knowledge I mean. One time Nesbitt, a Jewish boy and I were lab partners. This guy made a snide remark to the Jew. He was kicked out of school because he couldn't make it, this particular person. So this gives you an idea that he had to be pretty narrow minded to make that statement. The Jewish boy became a General. Not through the ranks per se, but to become a buyer and seller for the government you had to have rank to deal with some of these people, so they gave him the rank. He made a deal with the Army you might say to be assigned a General like that. He was one of the pretty smart boys too.

ES: Were there many women in Mechanical Engineering?

AD: One in the whole of engineering to my knowledge. She and I were in this mechanical engineering class together. I remember once they gave her a big old fly wheel to go cut teeth with and they gave me a little old piston [laughter]. This girl had to carry this big old fly wheel. I'll tell you another coincidence about her, I've got her name in my diary. When my daughter was a freshman here at Illinois she was in the orchestra and played the cello. The girl next to her played the cello and that was the daughter of that very same girl who was in my class. We found that out that night when I came down to see the program.

ES: Do you know if she used her degree? Did she go into engineering as a career?

AD: Oh yes. I'm positive. Probably take over her daddy's business. He had a big business down by St. Louis. Chief Executive Officer or Owner, I don't know which. In those days he probably could have owned it. I don't recall their name. I know Sagamon Electric was pretty big down there, but I don't think that was it. They made like meters and things. I don't believe that was it, it was something else.

ES: Was there anything else you'd like to say? Any other memories you have?

AD: Well, I have a lot of friends of course that I have from here that went through there that became doctors and that type of thing. Godfrey Sperling [G. Sperling Jr.], did you interview him?

ES: No.

AD: Oh, you ought to get a hold of Godfrey. You know who he was? He was the chief of the Washington Bureau of the Christian Science Monitor, he was the chief. He still, to this day, holds breakfasts every once in a while for dignitaries or people in the news. He'll have a breakfast and invite just certain reporters and this particular person. Then these people ask questions. I think he had President Clinton there when he was running for the first time. Someone brought up the affair down there in Arkansas that hadn't been made public before then, but somebody came out and asked that question. That came out on his show first.

ES: So you went to school with him?

AD: Oh yes, high school and college both, same. But I never saw him. Like I said, most of the guys I never saw hardly because they took other classes. They were on the south end of campus and I was north all the time. Another fellow, Dick Little, he was an EE also. He was a friend from school. Dick [Little] I didn't really meet him until college if you get right down to it. He used to live across the street from my wife when he lived over on Daniels I think, or Chalmers. She lived in a white house over on the corner where the YMCA is now. So when they moved out of there over here to Urbana I think they tore that down and built that into the Y not long after that. Little things about town. This fellow, I told you that he brought his sister down and I took her to the Senior Ball. He had started for Capitol Airlines, if I remember right. He designed the ice de-icers, did all the experiments. He set up some of the early de-icers for some of the airplanes. He was pretty knowledgeable and pretty good—he did a lot of good work. Like I said, Godfry became this Washington Bureau man, one fellow became a general. Maybe more than one of them did but I remember him especially because we were in lab class together several times.

ES: Do you think the U of I has a positive effect on your life?

AD: Oh, I think so in a lot of respects. What I would have done is kept on caddying maybe and maybe turn pro. I was pretty good, I was getting pretty good I mean. I probably could have played the circuit in time with more practice. I might have just kept in that or got something else. I applied for a lot of jobs but no one ever would give me a job. I remember one lady owned Quality Bakery I think, or Sunbeam which became big later, but I think it was Quality. It was right over here in Champaign and I applied. I would work nights or anything, but she wouldn't take me. I know why I went over, I knew her through a church so I thought she might give me a job but she didn't. I think she thought I was too young maybe.

ES: This was in high school?

AD: Probably that or before. Anything to get a job. Probably felt sorry for me like that first lady I caddied for. I'm skinny. When I took wrestling my freshman year in college, I weighed in at 127 pounds and I was 6 feet tall. I was pretty skinny. I stayed that way for a long time really.

ES: Thank you.

END OF INTERVIEW.