

**University of Illinois Student Life and Culture Archives
Galesburg Campus Oral History Project
Interviewee: Kenneth Roellig, 1950 graduate and alumnus of the Galesburg campus
Interviewer: Spenser Bailey, Student Life and Culture Archives
Date: 13 June 2024
Method: In-Person, Tolono, IL
Length: 1:47:46¹**

Spenser Bailey: Alright, we go for real now.

Kenneth Roellig: OK.

SB: So this is an interview for the University of Illinois Archives. My name is Spenser Bailey. I am an archives research and processing assistant at the University of Illinois Archives. Today I'm speaking with Mr. Kenneth Roellig. Mr. Roellig is an alumnus of the university, as am I, and we're going to talk about his time at U of I at the Urbana and Galesburg campuses.

I should also add that I have previously spoken with Mr. Roellig about his time in the service for the Library of Congress Veterans History Project, so that's how I was able to meet him and find out about his time at the university. The date today is June 13th, 2024. We are speaking at Mr. Roellig's home in Tolono, IL.

KR: Right.

SB: And sir, first of all, thank you very much for having me over again. It's great to see you and I'm really glad to be talking to you about this.

KR: Good deal.

SB: Yeah, great. And just if at any time you want to take a break or anything, just let me know and we can go from there.

KR: Sure.

SB: So to start off, could you tell me your full name and where you are from or where you were born?

KR: Kenneth Roellig, born in Shelby County, Illinois, and presently, live in Tolono.

SB: And how old are you, sir?

¹ **Transcriber's Note:** This transcription was originally created by Microsoft Word's AI transcription tool, and then was edited for clarity and fidelity to the recording. Some "filler" words – "Um," "Mm hm," and others – were not included in this transcription. Additionally, repeated words and phrases were removed when possible. I endeavored to write a transcription as faithful as possible to the conversation between interviewer and interviewee. That said, there may be some errors, so anyone considering citing any part of this interview is encouraged to listen to the relevant part of the conversation and make their own determination of what was said.

KR: 98

SB: So that makes you born around 1925.

KR: Right, November 14th, 1925.

SB: 1925. And did you grow up in Shelby County as well?

KR: I did, hometown Windsor, IL and went to high school there and lived on a farm out in the country for the 1st about 12 years of my life, I guess 13.

SB: Mm hm.

KR: And then we moved to town.

SB: And that's Windsor?

KR: Windsor.

SB: And do you have brothers and sisters?

KR: I have a brother who is now deceased and I have a sister living in normal IL.

SB: Umm, so it was the three of you guys and your folks?

KR: Right.

SB: And you know, when you when you were growing up, where did you attend? Where did you attend school?

KR: I attended a science hill grade school. And went out of town in Windsor. Small school. There, I went through the 8th grade. First grade, I had classmates, but after that I was the only one in the class the rest of the year.

SB: Oh, your classmate moved or something.

KR: Their family moved out and for the next 7 years I was the only one in the class.

SB: Was it just you and the teacher? Or did you sit in with other classes?

KR: There were, there were. Let's see. I would say anywhere from 5 to 8 in the school most of the years.

SB: Was it like a one room school?

KR: One room school, all grades.

SB: All grades, everybody was together.

KR: Right, everybody in the same room.

SB: What was it? What was it like learning in that environment?

KR: Well, one thing about it, you moved at your speed and, I think you've got quite a bit of personal attention.

SB: Mm hm.

KR: And, you learn from those ahead of you cause you would hear them reciting and doing things in class, and I'm sure the kids behind you learn from you.

SB: So, was your brother or your sister also there at the same time you were?

KR: My brother was, but my sister's 10 years, 11 years younger than I am.

SB: OK, so you were older by the time she went to school.

KR: Yeah, right.

SB: What was, how far was your school from your farm where you lived?

KR: About a mile and a quarter, we.

SB: I'm assuming, did you walk?

KR: We walked it every day and then in the eighth grade, I think it was, we got bicycles, so we were able to ride the bicycle to school. And then I also rode the bicycle to high school.

SB: And when you were going to, and you walked, I'm assuming no matter what the weather was.

KR: Well. If the weather was really bad, my dad took us in the car.

SB: That makes sense, but if it was nice like, today or something?

KR: Oh. Most of the time we walked.

SB: Most of the time you'd walk.

KR: But in the real bad weather during the winter, my Dad would take his school.

SB: Yeah, you know how bad these winters can get. And what was? Did you have a favorite? I guess you know, when you were in grade school, did you like going to school? Was it a, you know, did you enjoy learning or was it kind of just something you did or how did that work for you?

KR: I think you enjoy it. I think you missed it when you didn't go but, and just like, all kids, you're happy when summer comes and you're free to be outside. So, but it was just one of those things that you knew you were going to do and you didn't worry about it one way or the other.

SB: And it was, the schedule was like it is now, where you were off for a lot of the summer.

KR: Right.

SB: And so when you, so you were in that school through 8th grade you said?

KR: All eight grades.

SB: And when you went to high school where did you go for that?

KR: I went to high school in Windsor High School. They had built a new school in 1936, I believe it was. And so I went from 1939 so it was a new building.

SB: Oh, it was nice and new. What was it, how many students were there? I'm assuming you probably were not the only one in your class anymore.

KR: No, there were 20, about 27 in our, my class. It was about 100 kids.

SB: What was it like going from the school that was very small to having a lot of peers around?

KR: It was, to start with, it was a little bit scary because most of the kids had gone to school together in the grade school in town.

SB: OK.

KR: And I didn't know anybody because I came from a school with myself and living in the country. I really hadn't associated with any of the kids in town.

SB: So you were you were meeting a lot of new people who had already known each other in a few cases.

KR: Right.

SB: So it took some getting used to.

KR: It took quite a while to get used to, yes.

SB: And if I may, I realized I forgot to ask about your grade school. What were your, what was the teacher like? Was it just one teacher for the whole, for all of you? Or did that did you have different teachers?

KR: No, we had, each year you had a different teacher. Probably in the 8 years I had, probably 4 different teachers.

SB: What were they like? Were they young folks, old folks, or in between?

KR: Most of them were young folks. One got married during the time that she was teaching there. I guess yeah, you'd have to say they were all young.

SB: And was it, were they, were they nice, you know? Was it, were they good teachers to learn from?

KR: I think I had good teachers. Probably one year, and I probably shouldn't say it, but she got married and I think her married life. She was concerned about what we're going to have for supper and all that kind of things and the I think she devoted the major part of her time outside the school.

SB: I see.

KR: It was a nice way to say it.

SB: Like that, that's kind of how you put it and I also want to ask just before I ask you more about high school. You know, when, had your had your parents attended school much the same way you did where it was kind of out in the country or you know, were they, was it important for them that you and your siblings go to school and and get an education?

KR: Yes, my mother went to a country school. My dad went to a parochial school and both of them were, lived a mile or more away from the school.

SB: So they were in the same boat as you guys.

KR: Same boat as I was.

SB: But it was, but it was important for them that you and your siblings go to school and.

KR: Yes, very much so.

SB: That makes sense, especially if your dad was driving you when the weather was bad.

KR: Yeah, he, but we wouldn't, there wasn't any thought that you wouldn't be going to school.

SB: You were. You were going. It wasn't.

KR: Right.

SB: That makes sense. Yeah. And then when you were in high school and this was, this was in Windsor.

KR: Right.

SB: What was it like being a student there? You know, you said it was a bit of an adjustment process with the other kids. Was it a, do you think, how was it to be a student at the high school there with more kids and more things going on?

KR: Oh, one thing I didn't participate in very many things after school because of living about 3 miles away from the high school and riding a bicycle to school. So I didn't really participate that much. School life was. I was a good student and really, things went along very well.

SB: Was there, I'm also curious, because I work for the library really. Does Windsor have a library in the town?

KR: They did not at that time, no.

SB: Did your high school have one?

KR: We had a library, yes.

SB: Did you go there to read a lot or?

KR: I don't think you did. I don't think I read it a lot. No, I wouldn't say I used it that much. No, it was available. Yeah. The library was also the study hall.

SB: But it was it was there, that makes sense. So you'd go there to study or something.

KR: Right, yeah.

SB: And you know, did you, had either of your parents attended college?

KR: No. No. My dad only went through the 8th grade. My mother went through a three-year high school.

SB: And had they, when you were growing up, was there an expectation or a thought that you and your siblings might go to college or was that something that came for you later?

KR: I don't think there was, ever, I don't ever remember us even talking about college. Well, first of all, the war was going on. When I was in high school and that was going to be the major thoughts I had rather than college.

SB: So, you had, and we talked about this previously in our in our earlier conversation, but I'll ask again you know because you had an idea that you would probably be going the service at some point.

KR: Yes.

SB: And if I might ask also about the war, you know, did, you know, we've talked or we know about, you know, rationing and those sorts of things that changed, you know? Did anything change in in your high school when the when the war started or you know, were there any changes in your school or teachers going for?

KR: I don't think there was any. One of the major changes probably was that we lost a couple of teachers.

SB: Mm hm.

KR: Three teachers.

SB: They went to join the service.

KR: They went into the service. And I think we were all cognizant of the fact that we were going to be going later on if things didn't change.

SB: Did any, I know that people who were who were 17 could join the service with their folks permission. Do you know anyone that left high school early to join up?

KR: Right. I had in my senior class. We had four that went to the service before they graduated.

SB: So they joined, they joined up early.

KR: Right. Well, I don't know if they joined early voluntarily or if they were drafted.

SB: But it could, but it was. You had.

KR: Because they would have been 18 and they were drafting at 18.

SB: So when and so in those days when somebody turned 18, that meant they were eligible to be drafted.

KR: Right.

SB: And umm, so you weren't, you weren't drafted when you were in high school.

KR: No, because I was only 17 when I graduated.

SB: Oh, you were. OK, so and nobody. And when somebody in those days when somebody was 17, they were the draft was not going to take them until they were 18.

KR: No.

SB: When people did? Was there any sort of a sendoff for those guys who left before there was a graduation? Or did they just kind of say so long one day and go?

KR: I don't remember ever having anything.

SB: So they might, they probably just, you know went and.

KR: They were drafted.

SB: And you know what, I mean so, and you said that some teachers had left for the service as well. Was it because they were drafted or did they want to join up after Pearl Harbor or do you know?

KR: One of them was a National Guard, or something, which automatically you went in as a officer. I think he was a Lieutenant when he went in.

SB: So he was in, he was in the guard, so he was already in the service.

KR: He was in something that said where he was automatically, you might say. And the others? I think they were just drafted.

SB: Because I guess you know, if you were a teacher that didn't, you didn't get, there was no exemption for that you're just getting...

KR: No, no.

SB: you're getting drafted and you know, and we've spoken about this previously and I will link when I eventually, when this conversation eventually ends up in our collections, I'll link to it, but just a little bit. So you eventually did join the service or you were drafted.

KR: I was drafted.

SB: And that was in 1944.

KR: 1944.

SB: And would you speak a little bit about what your time in the service was like?

KR: I went in in 1944, went to basic training down in South Carolina. When I got, and this was during the Battle of the Bulge, when I was in basic training. When basic training was over, went home on furlough for a week and then went directly overseas to Italy. This was during April of 45. Then the war was over. And then they sent me, transferred me from the infantry to the combat engineers. And sent me to school in Rome. Then we move on up to northern Italy, to be transferred again. And we were going to be transferred in. Someplace. And as we went through the Straits of Gibraltar. This, the atomic bomb had been dropped, just the day that we were supposed to leave or right at that time. And then we went through the Straits of Gibraltar on the way to the Panama Canal. They changed course and we came home.

SB: So the idea was you were probably on your way to Japan, but.

KR: I was on the way to Japan or someplace over there, yes. And then we went to, I went to Texas for about two months, three months. And then was transferred to Fort Knox, KY, where I finished out in the service.

SB: And you were you were discharged in 1946 then, right?

KR: 1946 August.

SB: In August of 46, and if I might also ask, you know, when you were, I looked up where Windsor is at, Shelby County.

KR: Shelby County, just down...

SB: So, you know, had you ever had you ever been up to Champaign, to the, and seeing U of I when you were younger?

KR: No, no.

SB: Because I, I was, I've talked to a couple of people who sometimes, like, came in from elsewhere to like, see a football game or something. But you guys never did that.

KR: We had never, no, I had no. The only thing that, when I got back, of course it was in August and I couldn't get in in the fall and so applied then for the winter quarter, spring.

SB: And when you know and you had said that when you were younger, you and your folks didn't really talk about you guys going to college or anything like that, when did you, when did you get the idea that that you would want to go to college when you got back from the service?

KR: I think as I came, when I came home, being a little older at that time, I think when I came home I got, throwing around in my mind now, "What am I going to do?" So, the only thing we could do is go to school. And, that, and I guess we just kind of drew it out of the hat and got into U of I.

SB: And, you we and we talked about this before and you went you attended on the GI Bill?

KR: Right.

SB: And when did you first? When did you first hear about that or that that would be available to to vets coming back?

KR: I think we, because when we were discharged. I think they gave us ideas on that.

SB: Just making sure these are going. OK. Yeah, they are.

KR: I think they told us about the GI Bill and what it would offer. So we were giving, given notice ahead of time.

SB: So there, so when you were when you're being mustered out, you know, they talk about. "Well, here's things that are available to you guys."

KR: Right. I think that was the way it was.

SB: So you kind of got to thinking well, you know, I'll take advantage of this.

KR: Yeah.

SB: And did you? Did you choose U of I just because it was kind of close by or it just ended up being what what you knew about or you had heard of it or something?

KR: I think I chose it simply because it was closer to home than any other school around except Eastern and. I, I don't know, it just kind of fell in place.

SB: Just it just kind of made sense.

KR: Yeah.

SB: And so you and you said that you got back, you left the service in August. So that means you missed the fall semester of 46 by just by just a little bit amount of time, right?

KR: Yeah. I think it was 20. 20 something of August when I got out.

SB: So that and that would that was probably right around when the fall semester was starting. So you were a little late for that, what did you? How did? How did you apply? What? What do you remember about the applying and signing up process?

KR: Right. You know, I do not remember a thing that was in, I don't remember, I think. I think I applied by mail. And I think they of course I got rejected because I was too late, way too late.

SB: Oh, you started out applying for the fall and they said, yeah.

KR: Right and so but they gave me the option and so then I applied for the spring and it started a little late they were, I don't remember, what was the reason, but we, I don't think we started until the 1st of March.

SB: Oh, that's pretty late for a spring in the college. So did you, in between, when you got back and when you started, did you work somewhere or you did?

KR: Yeah. Right. I worked at the grain elevator when they were bringing in grain.

SB: Just a job to have in between make some money.

KR: Right, right.

SB: And did, when you when you applied for College in those days, did you have to say what you wanted to study your major in right away, or did you just kind of apply and then pick that later?

KR: I think you just applied in LAS or general studies. And, you need to, I applied to get it into the LAS and for the two years before I went into the major.

SB: So. So in those days you would kind of be general studies in LAN and then you would have a major?

KR: Right, right.

SB: And did you, even though you weren't applying for a major at the time, did you have an idea of what you might want to study at that time, or were you not quite there yet?

KR: I can't say that I had a special thing, but I do think I was leaning toward education.

SB: Towards education, uh huh.

KR: Right.

SB: Do you have any idea why that was or just appealed to?

KR: I think it was because I had a good time in school. I had a good record, grade wise, in school, high school. And I guess I just looked at it as a possibility.

SB: So it made sense to you? That's what was in your mind?

KR: Right.

SB: And so when you, when you eventually did start in that March, where did you, where did you start your schooling at? Where were you? Were you in Urbana?

KR: No, I was living at home at Windsor, right?

SB: Oh, you were. And when you when you so then when you went to go to college, how did to actually start? How did that work?

KR: Well. When I applied and was accepted, then there was a starting date. That you were to be there. And really, that's the only, they gave a date like the 1st of March and you were to be here and we'll get you lined out.

SB: When you say here was that up in Urbana?

KR: No.

SB: That was at Galesburg.

KR: That was Galesburg.

SB: And had you ever heard of the Galesburg campus before then?

KR: No, not at all.

SB: So you did, so you it wasn't like you decided, "OK, I'll attend the Galesburg campus." They just said here's where you're going.

KR: I don't know. You had no choice because they were filled up at the U of I and I knew that when I got my application rejected from Champaign-Urbana, that I would be going to Galesburg.

SB: You knew. You knew that.

KR: Right. I knew that ahead of time.

SB: Because the, and that must have just been because there were all the servicemen coming back and.

KR: The older servicemen got out before I did because I had, you had to have so much time in and I went in just before the war was over, so there were a lot of.

SB: Ohh yeah. I see.

KR: You might say, well, I don't know the percentage, but probably half of them were already out long time before I was.

SB: Ohh so the guys who got the guys who had maybe joined up a year earlier than you did got out in 45 and wanted to start school then.

KR: Right. Right. So they were starting. So I was kind of the tail end of that, that group.

SB: And had you had you? Ever heard of the Galesburg campus, because I mean you, you must have known that it was up in Urbana, but this so the concept of Galesburg was new to you?

KR: I had no idea until I got a letter from them that the Urbana campus was full and that I would be accepted at the Galesburg campus, but it would be part of the U of I.

SB: So you figured, "OK, well, we can do that."

KR: [Unintelligible] where you went.

SB: And how did you? How did you get to Galesburg? Did you take a train up there?

KR: No, I drove up and, no, I went by bus. I went by bus up.

SB: Went by bus.

KR: I went by bus up. One time I drove up it was going to be for a couple of days for some meetings tonight, but no, I took a bus up to Galesburg.

SB: And did you have to have? Did they have they given you a list of any books or anything you were supposed to bring beforehand?

KR: Not that I know of.

SB: Just kind of said get yourself to Galesburg and we'll....

KR: Get your get yourself up here and we'll get you lined up.

SB: What do you remember after you got off the bus? What is your do you have a, what's the first thing you remember about about getting there and getting set up?

KR: I think first, I'm sure I drove up to take up clothes and things like that, and then came back home and then took a bus up couple days later.

SB: OK, so you went up, you drove you stuff up.

KR: Right. And then, yeah. To take up, I had a foot locker.

SB: You had a footlocker?

KR: And took it up with clothes and get a little bit acclimated and then then drove back home and took a bus.

SB: So what was the campus? What was the school? What was it like? What had it had it been something before it was?

KR: I think it was a mental hospital.

SB: Ok.

KR: Where it had. Hallways with rooms off of this central hallway. And the, it was fairly large, but everything, the offices, everything was in that setup. The cafeteria, all the classrooms, our dorm rooms. Everything but the gym. The gym was in the building by itself, but the rest of it was all within that campus [unintelligible].

SB: So it so it hadn't been, it wasn't built as a college. It was something that the university had had purchased or something and kind of converted it. And when you went to, when you went up early to, when you saw it for the first time, when you went to take your foot locker up, you know, do you remember what your first thought about seeing the whole thing?

KR: No, I don't remember any special thought. Because I had gone to school in the army and for small periods of time where the classrooms were kind of that way. And but otherwise, I don't think I had any. I know I wondered what they're going to be like with 20 men in a dormitory room.

SB: Ohh you so you had a, you were in a dorm with 20 other guys.

KR: Right.

SB: What was that like?

KR: Well, it was a little disconcerting. You were reacting with several people. None of them that you knew ahead of time. And I think you. It's hard for all of us to maybe mesh in together because wanted to be working, studying at a time when others want to be goofing off.

SB: I see, yeah. Which group were you in?

KR: I would say I was rather studious. I had been out of high school.

SB: For a couple of years.

KR: Yeah, long enough that getting back in the groove of high school, of studying, it was a little difficult to go right back into it.

SB: Because you'd been, you'd been out of high school. You worked for a bit, and then you were in the service for a couple, so it was you had to readjust, kind of.

KR: Now most I would say that 3/4 of our students in there, we're in the same boat I was in.

SB: Ah, they had come out of the service.

KR: Come out of service. Well, it looked that way. Let's say about half of them and then the other half were just out of high school.

SB: So people who were a couple of years younger than you and had missed the service that time around.

KR: Right.

SB: So just the normal, the people that would normally be going from high school to college that year was it so was it, was it mostly men or were there female students there also?

KR: Yeah. There were some female, but not very many.

SB: Not many. It was definitely more men than women, yeah.

KR: Yes, right.

SB: How many classes did you take when you first got there or what was the study schedule like? Because you said it was all together in one building.

KR: It's all together in one building we took. I don't know how many, 14 hours, I think I had the first year, but I'm not positive of that, but it was a general studies.

SB: Kind of just in in you know, because you said there was you didn't quite have like a set major yet.

KR: No, no, I had a, I know I had a math class and I think I had a grammar class. It was just a general as everybody takes, it doesn't have any headline where they're headed.

SB: Everybody was kind of taking the same kinds of classes.

KR: Right.

SB: And what were the, what were the professors like?

KR: I had good instructors except for, well, I shouldn't say. I had one instructor for trigonometry that I had trouble understanding her. And. I have about 40 hours in math, at U of I, but that three hours was probably the worst of the whole.

SB: So you're so of all of the math courses you took when you were a college student, that one was.

KR: That was #0. [Laughs]

SB: Ouch. I had a calculus class that was very similar to that.

KR: Of course, that was my first time back to studying.

SB: Oh, so that was that was that first semester.

KR: That was the first semester and, otherwise, really I don't have any special thoughts about any of the classes. Every one of them went well. And I didn't have any problems with with any of them, really. After I kind of got to go in and then that trig class.

SB: And once you got used to being a student.

KR: Right.

SB: So you said there were there were you had 20 men in a in a dorm room with you, you know, and probably a lot of other dorm rooms also. How many students would you say were at the campus overall?

KR: You know, I to have no idea.

SB: But it was definitely more than a couple hundred. It was more than that.

KR: Yes, I would say probably. I would say probably least 1000.

SB: At least 1000. OK, so it was a decent amount of people. And what, you know, when you all weren't studying, you know, was there. You said there was a gym, you know, was there opportunities to play sports or socialize or do things like that?

KR: Oh yeah. I used the gym very little. They had a small golf course right close. I don't know. I was trying to think today what it was.

SB: You did.

KR: Like a 5 hole or something and a fellow from Utah... I had never played golf, knew nothing about it. He played golf. Or little bit and, so he and I would go out over noon hour and maybe play 5 rounds, five holes or something like that.

SB: So you got it. You got an hour off from class around lunch.

KR: Right. I had some time off.

SB: Well, so and you were learning to play golf at the start, yeah.

KR: I played a little.

SB: So that was something else new.

KR: Right, that I had never done before, knew nothing about.

SB: So was the, this fellow from Utah. So was he a friend of yours then?

KR: Actually, after that first semester, I think it was the first semester. Or maybe summer school. I don't remember, but anyway. I had no classes with him. I don't know how we connected but after semester, well then, he, left and so I and I lost track of him completely.

SB: But you were friends for at least that's enough. And was it, did you, did you make other friends when you were there?

KR: I wouldn't say that I made any close friends.

SB: Ah. You were just got. You were very busy with stuff.

KR: I was studying and, yeah, I don't think. I mean, I had nobody I followed through with.

SB: And if I may also ask, you know, because you had said that there were some other folks from Windsor? Who were, who had been in the service, and I think you told me not today, but previously that your brother had also been in the service.

KR: Right.

SB: Did he attend Galesburg or did anyone else from your town attend Galesburg as well?

KR: No, nobody else attended. My brother did. My brother was a year behind, I believe. I think maybe he was only there 1 semester.

SB: So at first...

KR: But he was at the same time I was for a little while.

SB: For a little bit, but at first when you got there, you were the only person from Windsor. What, you mentioned the cafeteria was. So was that in that same building with everything else?

KR: Right. Same, same building.

SB: What was the food like?

KR: I don't remember of anything particular, just normal, just food.

SB: Cafeteria food.

KR: After having been in the army, probably the same type.

SB: You're used to dining hall food.

KR: Right, yes.

SB: And were there? Yeah, I know up here in Urbana, you know, there's all sorts of clubs and fraternities and things. Did Galesburg have anything like that?

KR: If they did, I. I think everybody was there just as a stop gap measure before they went to the U of I.

SB: So a student wouldn't spend all four years at Galesburg?

KR: Oh, no.

SB: No, it was just the first couple?

KR: Oh. One year or or maybe two years. I don't think, I don't know. Well, it might, get some of them. Might have gone two years, but I think probably a year or a year and a half was it.

SB: So everybody knew that they would eventually finish up at U of I, that it was kind of you were doing your introductory classes there.

KR: Right. All right.

SB: And you know, when was it ever? Because a lot of, you said probably half of the other students at Galesburg had been also in the service. Was it, excuse me. Did anyone ever talk about their time in the service? Or, you know, did everyone keep kind of keep to themselves about that.

KR: I don't remember ever sitting down and talking about the service.

SB: So it was kind of like ever, you know, a lot of people had been, but it wasn't like you were reminiscing or anything.

KR: No, no, I wouldn't. I wouldn't say that I ever. No. And maybe a little high on the number who came from the service. But anyway, no, I wouldn't.

SB: No, I think you're. I think you're pretty, I think you're pretty good on the number because before I came this morning, I was doing some reading in the archives on about Galesburg so I'd know what questions to ask you and it was, your, your number is pretty good. If anything you might be low.

KR: Well, it was. You live in this one dorm and the next dorm over, you didn't really associate with them.

SB: So the so the people you talked with when you did speak with people mostly were the folks in your dorm. And you had said that, you know, sometimes some people wanted to be sleeping or studying and others, you know, goofing off and stuff. Did Galesburg have a library where you could study?

KR: They had a small library, but it was not very big. I don't know if I ever went to study there.

SB: You did your studying in the dorm?

KR: I did it mostly in the dorm.

SB: And how was? If you remember, you know, how were the how were the dorms arranged? Were you guys in in bunks or did you have desks or how did that work?

KR: We did not have bunks. We had a spot about like in the service. You had a spot about, so wide and you had the bed, you had your foot locker. That was it.

SB: Did you have a desk?

KR: No.

SB: No. So you'd study probably sitting on your bed.

KR: I, but I don't remember like working math problems. I don't uh. I don't remember what surface I had to to work on.

SB: But it was kind of...

KR: I might have had a little desk.

SB: They might have done that.

KR: Yeah.

SB: But it was, I guess because, you know, keeping in mind that it, you know it had been converted from being a hospital of some sort. So it was still. You know, so it hadn't been built to be a university. Like up at U of I .

KR: No, no, no.

SB: Was it ever? Was that ever a, you know, did it ever get to be a problem, that everything was in one building or? Did it work pretty well?

KR: It worked pretty well, especially. Galesburg has a notoriety of getting a lot of snow during the winter.

SB: They do, ok.

KR: It's very handy.

SB: You didn't have to go outside.

KR: No.

SB: That works. Oh, that works very well then.

KR: Yeah.

SB: And, you know, cause the campus is. I looked up. You know where it is in physically in Galesburg. Did you ever go off campus to do things in the town itself?

KR: The only time I ever went Uptown, as far as I remember, I got my first glasses.

SB: Oh, you did.

KR: And. I went to an optometrist there. But otherwise, no. Mostly stayed there.

SB: Stayed. Uh-huh. And you know, when, you know, you said that that you so, you know, socialize mostly with the folks that were in your dorm. You know, I don't know if you did, or did anyone else, did any female and male students ever date when they were at Galesburg?

KR: I don't know. We had a group about five or six that had been in the service. And they were all Catholic. And they went out together on Saturday nights and on the town. Financially, I really had no money. I mean, I had the GI Bill, but that was the basics. I couldn't afford.

SB: To do that.

KR: Yeah, I didn't have any money. And they would go out on the town and then come in. And go to mass. And then it's on Sunday morning, early 5:00 mass or whatever, and then come back to the room and want everybody to be quiet so they could sleep during Sunday.

SB: Oh, so they've been out on the town. On Saturday, going to, going to mass and then wanted to come back and rest and all of you all are getting up at the time.

KR: Yes, right. It was different living with 20 people.

SB: Had it been, you know, when you when you were in the service, were you ever in a group of in a dorm or barracks like that or was it were you mostly in tents?

KR: And part of my service time my beginning service time and basic training. I was in a barracks like that, but nobody went any place.

SB: Oh, because you're all in.

KR: Because that was during the war and the basic training and when you got. When you got supper over an evening, you were ready to climb in and rest a while.

SB: So and when you so when you were in basic training, it was a similar situation, but everybody was in the same boat. It wasn't like some people were studying and some, you know, you were all and you were all tired.

KR: Right. Right. And we had some young kids in there that just got here from high school. In fact, I remember the very first day two of them came in and this, "Where are the girls?" That was the first comment, they were just out of high school. And I think that was the lesser of the thoughts of them there.

SB: So. So there was kind of a couple different groups of people.

KR: Right in at different levels.

SB: And so that was so those guys walked right into the room and said, “Alright, where are the ladies at?”

KR: Yeah. And then found out they weren't around.

SB: They must have been disappointed. What do you have any, what other memories in your mind stand out of your time at Galesburg.

KR: I think basically. I was there to study, I was there to get good grades. I was there to move on, to lay the groundwork for my transfer to the university up here. I think I really threw myself into study.

SB: Into study. You were, and it seems like that with the way that the place was organized, it was conducive to that you were able to kind of focus in and not, you know, go out or around and didn't have to leave.

KR: Right. No, I didn't. We didn't go to hot dog stands or anything like that. It was, everything was right there. And I probably was more so on that because I [was] trying to get acclimated back into the school. And. I always, even in high school pressed to get good grades.

SB: And so when you went to college, you even though you've been out of school for a few years, you still had that same mentality.

KR: I think that yes.

SB: And so how long were you? How long were you at Galesburg for?

KR: 3 semesters I think it was.

SB: 3 semesters.

KR: I think it was either 3 semesters or two semesters and one summer. I don't remember which, but I think it was 3 semesters and then I was there 1 summer.

SB: And then you transferred over here.

KR: Right.

SB: Did you have to like apply to transfer or was it just kind of something that everybody did at a certain time?

KR: It was just automatic.

SB: It was automatic, so if somebody had, for example, wanted to stay at Galesburg, they couldn't. They kind of had to.

KR: Right, the courses that they had there were basic freshman courses.

SB: Even so, even if somebody for some reason wanted to be there for all four years, they couldn't.

KR: No, no, no way.

SB: And so when you when you transferred to up to U of I at Urbana, had you ever been to Champaign-Urbana before?

KR: No.

SB: So, so that was another new place for.

KR: Another new start over.

SB: Do you remember your first impressions of seeing campus up here?

KR: Well, I think. To get there when I came up here. I came on the bus even though it was only 50 some miles. I didn't have a car. I never owned a car. Then I came up on the bus. I got off at the Walgreens, one of the pharmacies uptown and had to find out which bus to take out to the campus. So I was learning a lot quickly.

SB: Yeah, you have to.

KR: Right. And the first semester I lived in University housing, right there, close to Huff Gym, some of those.

SB: So the men's residence halls, the ones the where, it's the two buildings and then the one in the middle.

KR: Right. Yes. So. And the I mean that was very handy for me.

SB: Very much so.

KR: So as I said, I came up with very few things, because no farther than it was to Windsor I could take a bus home and drive up and bring up some things. So it was a big adjustment to come up and then get the layout of this where my classes were.

SB: Not all in one building this time.

KR: And not only one building, it was summer school. I came up in summer school so I only had two classes. And so wasn't that much.

SB: So it was good to be able to adjust that way.

KR: Right. I got adjusted during the summer.

SB: And so, when you were in the men's residence halls of the university housing, how did you, was that something you were just assigned to?

KR: Yes.

SB: What was it like living there? Did you did you have a big room of a lot of men like you had at Galesburg?

KR: No, I think there were three in a room.

SB: Oh, OK, so much smaller.

KR: Yes, I believe there were three of us.

SB: Did you get along with your roommates?

KR: This no, no problems. Of course, that was only for an eight-week period.

SB: That was just in the summer. That's right.

KR: Well, and then. I move to on Illinois St., a private home.

SB: How did you? How did you find that to stay at? Was it like answering an ad or something?

KR: I don't know. I don't remember how, there I moved in with a friend of mine. From Stroudsburg, which is another town, he went to the same church I did.

SB: So you knew him growing up?

KR: And yeah, so he and I then were in this room had, on 900 something.

SB: On Illinois St.

KR: On Illinois St.

SB: And was it, was it nice having a having a friend that you knew instead of, you know, being kind of the only person you know not knowing anybody.

KR: Yes, yes. He and I got along well, we knew people and we were both, again, good students. And both of us stayed in the room a lot to work.

SB: And was and so you were just renting a room from a family or from somebody?

KR: Yes.

SB: Were there other students living there also or was it just the two of you?

KR: I think it was just the two of us. We had one room upstairs.

SB: Who were you renting from? With a professor or something?

KR: No. It was a family. The house is torn down now. And then, the next year, I moved over on the other side of the campus. The first one was on 1st St.

SB: On 1st St.

KR: It was on 1st St. and then I moved over the other side of the campus.

SB: Ohh then you moved over to Illinois.

KR: Yeah.

SB: And you know, and on campus at that time, you know, when you said you started out, it was summer school. You know, were there a lot of students there for summer school or was it fewer?

KR: There was a lot less. Yes, much less.

SB: There were definitely fewer. I guess that's one thing still like it is now. It's pretty quiet up there now.

KR: Yes.

SB: Obviously Urbana is very different from Galesburg. Do you remember your first impressions of when you saw the U of I in Urbana and what it was?

KR: I think it was, I was just awed at the number of students. Again, not the regular course terms. And the distance you might have to go from one class to the next. That you have to kind of plan out your schedule so that you can meet them.

SB: Yeah.

KR: And the, it's a different atmosphere completely.

SB: And you know when you mentioned classes, you know, how did you, did you have to register for your classes?

KR: Yes.

SB: Was and was that in the, did you have to go somewhere in-person to do that?

KR: I don't, you know what? Right now I can't remember how we did register for the classes.

SB: If I may try to jog your memory, it was I I think they've done it both in the main library and in the Armory. In the past.

KR: I think it probably was in the Armory, yeah.

SB: It was probably in the Armory. Because we have some, we have some pictures of what that looked like with everybody in there.

KR: Yeah, rows and rows of people in line to get. I think every class you took you had to go to that, that station. Yeah.

SB: So that must have taken a while.

KR: It did. It did.

SB: And so we when you were at Galesburg, you would kind of just taking some introductory classes.

KR: Right.

SB: Was it still like that for your first semesters at Urbana? Or were you starting to pick what you wanted to study?

KR: I think. I think we started. For example, I had German, I took German in Galesburg for three semesters.

SB: You are. Oh, so you had that every semester of Galesburg?

KR: Yes. And then when I came to University of Illinois for the 4th semester. I hadn't. This was in the fall and I had not done anything in German during the summer.

SB: Uh. Oh, so you were a little rusty?

KR: So I was rusty on it. I had the head of the German department as my instructor and the very first day he gave us a large German and we were to translate it into English.

SB: Uh huh.

KR: And I worked in Labor Day. Holiday. I mean I worked like a dog trying to get that done and he gave us a test on the first day. And I know I bombed it. And so I thought, I knew that I could drop German, switch to the College of Education. LAS you have to have a language, the College of Education, you did not need a foreign language.

SB: You do. Oh, I see.

KR: So I switched from German to one of the other requirements I was going to have in the College or Education. I mean that was my trying to get, but that's where I switched over then to College of Education.

SB: And so that was convenient for you with this, with this difficult German class, but also because you said previously that you were interested in education as well? So it made sense.

KR: Right. That's where I was going to go. So it just made it very, all I had to do was go down to the office and switch it over. I had it made.

SB: Where was the College of Education? What building was that in at the time?

KR: Most of the math classes were in Altgeld Hall. And then I had psychology classes and all other kind of classes. And they were scattered right there on the main campus.

SB: So a lot of your classes were off of the quad.

KR: Right.

SB: So, let's see at that point, the Illini Union would be there already. Did you go to the Union? Did you go to the Student Union a lot?

KR: No.

SB: No. Was it just? Was it something that not a lot of people did, or was it just your preference?

KR: I didn't, anybody that I associated with. I don't think any of them ever, ever went to the Illini Union.

SB: Never did. So what if you weren't going there? You know, where did you go when you weren't, what did you do for fun when you weren't studying?

KR: Well, basically, we spent a lot of time in our room.

SB: You did.

KR: I can't think of, I mean, we went to some, went to ball games and things like that, but.

SB: Football?

KR: Football. Basketball.

SB: What was it? What was it like going to those?

KR: Well, of course Huff Gym was...

SB: Right there. Yeah. Still, it's pretty, yeah.

KR: Huff Gym. We seem to be kept busy. But I don't know that many activities that we really.

SB: And what was it? What was it like going to football games in the stadium?

KR: Well, just big crowd and...

SB: Had you ever been to a big venue like that?

KR: No, no.

SB: So that was another thing that that was new for you.

KR: Right. Right.

SB: Was the team any good at that time?

KR: Yes, they were.

SB: They were.

KR: Yeah.

SB: Should get those guys now.

KR: Yeah.

SB: Did you go to the library to study? Or did you? You did.

KR: Yeah, we, I used the library quite a bit.

SB: You did. Uh huh.

KR: And there were times we studied together. I know one of the math classes, instructor didn't have a textbook. He gave us problems and showed us and he gave us one and I couldn't work it. Hmm. And they called one of the other guys, they were working on it, they couldn't follow it so, about 3 or 4 of us were all stunned on it, so we called the instructor to, we went to him and... of course, the Math Libraries, they're in Altgeld Hall. And we went to the Math Library and he worked and he worked and finally, he found that it was, but it was in German and. Of course, none of us knew German.

SB: And this this is the professor who is finding it?

KR: Yeah, you know, he, it took him a while to work it out. I don't even remember what it was, but it was some outlandish problem. But anyway, had real good instructors.

SB: Do you remember any of their names?

KR: No, I don't.

SB: They were good people to learn from.

KR: They've been very good.

SB: So you could go to them if you had questions, you know, they were approachable?

KR: Yes, yes.

SB: Did you ever speak with them? Like, did any professors ever like invite you to dinner at their homes or anything?

KR: No.

SB: No. Mostly it was on campus when you'd see them.

KR: Right.

SB: Did you ever have any involvement with like, like, did you ever meet any of the Deans for any reason, or was it mostly you would speak with the faculty when...?

KR: Will be a faculty member.

SB: It would be faculty members. Because I know some people have memories and have, you know, remembering meeting Deans and things like that. But there's nothing like that for you.

KR: Right. No. No, I didn't. Never even in graduate courses.

SB: Not even then, uh huh.

KR: No.

SB: What was it like, you know, it was a lot more students, obviously, 10, 15 times the amount of students in Galesburg. What was it like just interacting with your, how big were your classes? Was it a big lecture hall or like a smaller classroom?

KR: I had a psychology class was a lecture hall with 350 or something like that. Otherwise. I think that was the only one that I had a lecture hall. I think the rest of them were all workable class size.

SB: Well, that's good.

KR: Yeah, those lecture halls are...

SB: Yeah.

KR: But I think I have most of my classes being science classes and math classes, that a lecture hall would not be appropriate for those two.

SB: No, that's right. And when you say you had science classes, what sort of science were you learning? Was it chemistry or engineering?

KR: I took two semesters of chemistry, I had a couple semesters of physics, I had biology.

SB: So you really got a lot of the sciences, then.

KR: I have quite a bit of science. I have a minor in science.

SB: Ah. So, your major ended up being education.

KR: My major was math and my minor science.

SB: And how did you? What made you decide that you liked studying math enough to have that be your major?

KR: I don't know, just fell in place.

SB: It just fell in place.

KR: Just fell in place. And then when I went out in teaching, I taught, two science classes and three math classes for about 3 years, and then I went to everything, everything math.

SB: So you, so when you became, when you started to teach, you taught what your strong suits were?

KR: Right.

SB: So, when you were on campus, did you, I've always got to ask, you know, did you ever consider joining a fraternity or did that opportunity ever arise for you?

KR: I never even wanted to.

SB: You didn't want to.

KR: Number 1, financially, I squeaked through college without owing anybody anything but I had nothing. I worked in the summers. And with the GI Bill, I lived and that was just about it.

SB: Ah, where did you? Did you stay in in Urbana and work in the summers or did you go back home to Windsor?

KR: No, I went back home.

SB: And did you ever have a job during the school year or were you studying?

KR: I did not. I did not. I, well, wait, back at Galesburg, I had a job working in a jewelry store.

SB: Oh, you did.

KR: But it was only like an hour a day or two hours a day. It was kind of a clean-up type.

SB: Just to make some extra money.

KR: Make a little money.

SB: And when how did you, how did you find that job in Galesburg? Do you remember? Did you just answer an ad or something like that?

KR: Yeah. I don't, I don't remember.

SB: Did and I guess did a lot, did other students at Galesburg have jobs as well, or was that something that was less common?

KR: I don't know of any of them that did that had a job. I can't. I can't answer for them really.

SB: But you did for a bit, yeah.

KR: I did put, you know, just I think 1 semester for about, when I went in an hour a day or something like that, it's didn't amount to much but it was a little bit.

KR: Yeah.

SB: And when you, do you have I guess in all of your time at U of I os there one class that stands out the most for you, do you have a favorite?

KR: Well, I think my, most of my favorite classes would be in graduate school.

SB: In graduate school.

KR: Because my graduate school is all in administration. I had a class on insurance liability, all that type of thing. I think those were, meant more to me and were more involved than just the regular rote classes.

SB:I see. And so before I ask more about graduate school, how long you had said you were you were at Galesburg for about 3 semesters.

KR: Right.

SB: How long were you at the main campus in Urbana before you graduated?

KR: Well, we'll see, about two years. Yeah, yeah.

SB: About two years. What was it like? What was it like to graduate?

KR: Well, I was ready. I was 25 years old. I was ready to start a job. Of course, you're always apprehensive of what are you going to get into. And how am I going to get a job? So it was a, I mean, I didn't have a job when I graduated. I didn't get it until probably about, might have been four weeks after I graduated.

SB: And so and I guess also were you the first person in your family to graduate from college, then?

KR: Yes, I'm the oldest.

SB: Did you go to the graduation ceremony?

KR: Yes.

SB: What was that like?

KR: Very large, very large.

SB: Where did they? Where did they hold it?

KR: I was trying to think, Huff Gym, I think. But I'm not positive.

SB: But one of the big buildings, probably.

KR: Yeah, I think it was Huff Gym.

SB: Because that would probably be the, that would probably have the most space of any of the buildings that were there at the time.

KR: But the Assembly Hall wasn't there, and they didn't hold it outside.

SB: No, they didn't. It was inside. Oh, did your folks come up from Windsor?

KR: Yes.

SB: What was it? Uh, what was it like for them? Do you remember? Did they ever say?

KR: Well, I think they were very proud to think that I, being the first one in the family to be able to graduate and I know, when my, during that time, they would post on or just every, I guess, maybe every quarter, every semester. And uh. They would send a note to the hometown newspaper, putting in that...

SB: Oh, uh-huh.

KR: Kenneth Roellig has gained honors for this semester, and I know my dad was very happy and very proud of that. My mom probably too. But Mom didn't say anything.

SB: Well, they must have been. And you had said your brother, your younger brother was also there at a similar time. Did you see him much when you were in college?

KR: No, he and I did not, well in Galesburg, we were in the same dorm.

SB: Oh, he was in the same dorm with you for that one semester, he was there.

KR: One part of the time. And then when we came the U of I, he lived in a different area than I did. And he, being in engineering, he spent a lot of lab time.

SB: Ohh, he was he was in engineering when he was student.

KR: Because and so really, we didn't see each other very often.

SB: Often, every once in a while, perhaps.

KR: Just, yeah. Once in a while.

SB: Because I actually, I'll admit I looked you guys up in the student directories this morning. I looked for "Roellig," and I was like, "Oh, there they both, there he is."

KR: Yeah.

SB: So your brother was Russell, then?

KR: Right.

SB: So, I saw you both saw you both in there. So, we have a, where I work at the archives, we've got a big bookcase of directories and yearbooks and all sorts of things. Oh, and that reminds me, did you ever did you read the, did you read the *Daily Illini* when you were when you were, when you were a student?

KR: I think a little bit, but not on a regular basis.

SB: Not a regular basis.

KR: No.

SB: And had Galesburg had a newspaper or anything like that?

KR: If they did, I never did see it.

SB: Never saw it. Probably it wouldn't have been nearly as big as the...

KR: Yeah.

SB: Was there a campus radio station in those years, or did that come? Did that come later?

KR: I don't remember one.

SB: Did you have a radio in your dorm room?

KR: No, at Galesburg, no.

SB: How about up at Urbana?

KR: I think we had, we had a radio in Urbana. But, radio in the dorm room of 20 people doesn't work too well.

SB: No. Yeah, and it's probably pretty hard to hear too.

KR: Yeah. We did, up here. I know the election year of 1948.

SB: That was Harry Truman against Thomas Dewey.

KR: Right. Umm, I know we stayed up at night to hear the results.

SB: You did?

KR: Yes.

SB: What was, what do you remember about that?

KR: I know I wanted Truman to win. Because of dropping the atomic bomb and that's really about all I know of, but I was definitely for Truman.

SB: And you, but you wanted to stay up?

KR: We stayed up and my roommate was interested in it too, and so the two of us stayed up and.

SB: Ah. How late? How late did it go before they announced that Truman had won?

KR: I think around midnight I remember. I said, now they drag things out.

SB: Yeah. Yeah, it sticks out. I remember because I was a freshman in 2016 and we, you know, we stayed up to, God, I must have needed, I almost fell asleep in class because it took them until 2:00 in the morning to call the election.

KR: Yeah.

SB: But we were all saying, "Hey, every four years, we're going, we're going to stay up." It's really cool to hear that, that you guys did that as well. Was there a lot of, you were a Truman man, with the bomb..

KR: Right.

SB: Generally, a good president like that, but did students pay a lot of attention to politics and the and what was going on in the world at that time?

KR: I don't. I don't remember ever hearing any group talking about politics. I'm sure there were, but, I know how I was based and it's the two of us, we're thinking basically alike.

SB: He was also rooting for Truman?

KR: Right. And so. It was strong in our thinking of what we wanted to see happen.

SB: Well, it's good that you agreed.

KR: [Laughs] It was!

SB: The last thing you need is a Dewey and Truman fist fight out on the lawn at midnight. And I'm assuming you've, have you seen that that famous picture of President Truman holding up the newspaper that said that Dewey was going to beat him?

KR: Yep.

SB: That must have been something to, something to see that.

KR: Well, he wasn't supposed to win.

SB: But he came. Oh, and did you? Did you vote in the election?

KR: I doubt it.

SB: Did not a lot of students, do that at the time?

KR: I don't think. I know we didn't vote on campus and I didn't go. I didn't go home, so I, no, I didn't vote.

SB: No. That's very different now, all sorts of voting things when it comes to the election time.

KR: Well, you wonder. I'm sure there are not students who go home and vote and then vote here too. But it really throws the elections, student group throw off the elections in Champaign County.

SB: It is always, it's always interesting seeing the generally Democratic student group and the generally conservative, it's been interesting to watch that night. Yeah, I grew up near Chicago, so we have all of the running jokes about dead people voting and the first time I went to vote in an election, my dad and I were in line at the polling place and the gentleman in front of us goes, "Well, we're not far from Chicago, so don't I get 2 ballots?" And Dad and I were, the polling people were not amused, but my dad and I were cracking up. [Laughs]

KR: [Laughs]

SB: But, interesting. So there was, the next day, were people talking about the election?

KR: I don't remember of it.

SB: They might possibly, though, it seems like.

KR: They could have been. I don't remember of it.

SB: The other thing I'm keen to ask about, at that time the university was still in the kind of the *in loco parentis* phase where you know that they were very involved with the students, you know were there... restrictions on, you know, women, couldn't go in the men's dorms and vice versa was there, was that emphasized a lot about propriety and things like that?

KR: I don't remember of it. I don't remember it at all. Of course, there again, they didn't have that many dorms.

SB: That's right. Oh yeah, I suppose they wouldn't have been built at that time.

KR: And when they did have a dorm, it was the whole building was girls and I don't think men would go in at all.

SB: Oh, so if a gentleman had a date with a lady on the dorm he'd like pick her up at the door and drop her off at the door.

KR: Yeah, I think so. I don't remember it being any different than that, but it was, there wasn't the intermingling like they do now.

SB: Yeah, well, my freshman dorm, we had women in the room next door, not even in the same building, but yeah, very, it's very different than it.

KR: Now then, there was men's dorm and women's dorm.

SB: Oh, so the building would be...

KR: Yeah.

SB: ...it would be set aside and probably, it wasn't, probably women were not allowed in the men's dorm either.

KR: Oh yeah, same thing, yeah.

SB: Now the other thing I'm keen to ask about when you mentioned the 48 election. Later in the in the 50s, you know, there was the Red Scare and all the concerns about communism and things like that on campuses, was there ever any of that yet in the in 48 and 49?

KR: I don't think so. No.

SB: Nothing like that.

KR: No.

SB: I guess that would be that would probably be a little bit a little early for that. I think that kind of came a couple, so, did you graduate in 1950?

KR: 1950.

SB: 1950 Yes, now that I'm thinking about it, that might have come a little bit later.

KR: But then I was there in graduate school from 52 to 57.

SB: Oh, so you start, you weren't off all that long before you went to graduate school.

KR: Right. But I didn't go. I just went one night a week.

SB: Oh, you didn't go full time.

KR: No, I didn't. No, I used, it took me, well, took me 4 years to get my masters for, yeah, I got them. And then it took me another period of time to get my certifications.

SB: And why, if I may ask? Well, first of all, let me ask you, you went into teaching after you graduated. And where did you, did you teach here in Tolono right away?

KR: Right. No, I went to Sparta.

SB: To Sparta.

KR: For one year and then I moved up here.

SB: What brought you here to Tolono?

KR: Well, I, when I went down to Sparta, things were just a little different than I was used to.

SB: Uh huh.

KR: And, I thought I would probably want to go back to the U of I. And so, by living here in Champaign County, I was able to go to school while I was teaching.

SB: Yeah. So it was. It was a good way to...

KR: It was a good way to, yeah, to go on. So I took one night a week. I went a couple of summers. And I got my masters.

SB: Is that in education as well?

KR: In education.

SB: Education.

KR: And then I became a principal and then I became a superintendent before I had my administrator's certificate.

SB: And did you get that from U of I as well?

KR: Right.

SB: You did.

KR: Yeah. And so, you might say I got probably half of my administrator's certificate time while I was a Superintendent.

SB: So, you when you did your advanced studies, your masters and your certificate, you were working for most of the time?

KR: Right. I was working all the time.

SB: And if I may ask, why, you had said that you thought you might want to go back to U of I. What motivated you to go for your masters and attend graduate school?

KR: I think when I came back I taught a year here before I started in on it and I think it was just one of those things that I could do. And I had a Illinois GI Bill Rights. So I didn't have to pay any tuition.

SB: Oh, for your masters, either?

KR: For my masters. And it was just and I was single. So it was something that I could do that didn't cause too much conflict with my work schedules and so I just did it.

SB: So, you kind of figured, why not keep learning?

KR: Yeah, why not?

SB: And you did. So you would just drive up there in the one night a week. And did you said that you enjoyed your graduate classes a little bit more than those from undergrad? You know, did you is there one from grad school that stands out in your mind?

KR: Well, I said there was one on insurance. And then there was one on curriculum, math curriculum that I. But then again, I was right in my field and I already had experience with teaching several years, where I could put the two together so they were very worthwhile courses.

SB: So, and because you were working, at this time.

KR: Right.

SB: So you're picking up these skills, that you you're using and it, you know, it has a direct impact and benefit.

KR: Right. For example, I had one class and I don't remember what it was on, school administration. And there were probably 20 of us in the class. And I had already been a Superintendent for a couple of years.

SB: Mm hm.

KR: And we had a couple fellows in there, probably more than that, but the two is noticeable. That had just finished their bachelor's degrees and were working on a master's in administration. And had never taught. But they were talking about curriculum and the like, and he gave a talk in this class. And I guess I was shaking my head. You know just, not knowing it really and when he got done with his presentation the instructors looked at me and said, "You didn't believe a word he said, did you?" Of course, that puts you right on the spot, and then the instructor told the class that I was a, had been a teacher, a principal, junior high principal, superintendent of schools, and I probably had a little more experience. And probably my thoughts might have been more. So I say, I think some of those classes made you think because some of them were kids were younger, a lot younger than you, were taking the course. And they had ideas. And some of them were good, but some of them wouldn't work.

SB: So it was a mix of people who already were professionals like yourself, and then younger folks who were just out. So, you all had different perspectives, sort of.

KR: Right. Right.

SB: That makes sense. And so, would have gotten your masters in. 56 or 57 perhaps.

KR: I was thinking 56 I believe.

SB: Ah.

KR: And then I got my advanced certificate, I don't know. About four years later, I guess.

SB: So perhaps 60, 59 and you know in that time, you know, because that's probably 10-11 years since you started as a student.

KR: Right.

SB: Did the campus change much in that time, you know, did, were you noticing things that were different even then when you had been a student just a few years ago?

KR: I wouldn't say too much because you drive in, you drive out.

SB: Oh yeah, you weren't living there, of course, alright.

KR: No, no. I was living out here. Not here, but in Sadorus.

SB: In Sadorus, uh huh. In later years, you know you because you've been in this area ever since. Do you ever go up there still, to go to homecoming games or anything of that sort?

KR: I have really, while my kids were in college up there, went to Dad's Day game, things like that. But otherwise. I have not. Not been up there for much.

SB: And your kids, your kids went there, you know, did you? Did you suggest that based on your experience or did they just kind of decide to attend there on their own?

KR: The girl applied, my daughter applied over at ISU and here.

SB: Ah.

KR: But she wanted to come here. But use that as a base in case you didn't get in. Otherwise, and the son, I don't think he ever thought of any place else.

SB: It was, they were, that was...

KR: Right here, yep.

SB: Because they, because they grew up down here with you.

KR: Lived here.

SB: Oh, right here. So that's 25 minutes?

KR: Yeah.

SB: That's a good a good distance, but it's far enough that you're not with your folks all the time.

KR: Well, they lived up there all the time.

SB: They did, uh huh.

KR: He was in a fraternity and she was in a sorority.

SB: So they were up there?

KR: They lived up there, yeah. But they came home once in a while, have to have a home cooked meal once in a while.

SB: That's the best. And see your folks, of course. If I may ask, you know, look at kind of looking back, you know, on your time at U of I, you know, what do you when you reflect on it or when you think you know you must have used the things that you learned there in your, in your professional career. You know, how do you remember, when you remember your time at U of I, what do you think of, and what sorts of things come to mind?

KR: Well, I think a lot of it is that you solidify what you think. You might have an idea of how you want to do something. And if you see that up there, or hear that or something brought up in class that might solidify what you've done as an experiment type thing. I think that would probably be one of the major parts. I mean, there's a lot of things that come up that you have no idea, no background on them and you can get them pretty quick.

SB: That makes, you're learning!

KR: Yeah, you're learning.

SB: That's the whole point. If I might also ask, you know, at that time, and this is kind of just going back to Galesburg or to any, you know the way it, what's the best way for me to phrase this? Were there students who were people of color that were there, or was it, you know, was the school integrated at that time?

KR: At Galesburg, in our 20, there were none in that room. When I went to teaching. We had a few blacks in the school. But the town had a black grade school.

SB: Oh, it did.

KR: And a white grade school. And then they all came to one high school.

SB: Oh.

KR: But up here at Galesburg, in fact, in Galesburg, I don't remember ever seeing black...

SB: How about here? How about up here in Urbana?

KR: Well, most of the people I associated with, oh, well, all of them were. I guess I never, I can't think of any of the classes that I had blacks in the class.

SB: There definitely were some there, but it wasn't. There weren't many at that. There weren't many at that time.

KR: Yes. No, there couldn't have been because, in my classes, I really don't. There were very few women.

SB: Wasn't a lot at the time, yeah.

KR: No, not at all.

SB: It's interesting to, because we record student life, so it's always interesting to just hear about how things have changed. You know, we just do comparisons and things like that. You know and. If I may also ask, this is just the historian in me, I'm going to change, switch gears again. Do you remember the Cuban missile crisis? In 62.

KR: I knew of it, but that's not too much more.

SB: It wasn't a lot or how about? How about when Kennedy was shot?

KR: Then I think there was a lot of. I know my wife, my son was in kindergarten. In Pesotum.

SB: In Pesotum.

KR: And my wife went to pick him up and she heard it on the radio as she was going down to pick him up.

SB: Oh, on the way over.

KR: And she told the teachers there about it. I think. In the classrooms, it was definitely discussed.

SB: It was, of course, the. President being shot the huge, huge thing.

KR: Yeah.

SB: And did you, if I might also ask? Do you know that Kennedy spoke at Champaign in 1960 when he was campaigning?

KR: I know of it. But I don't think there were any anything that.

SB: You didn't go see him?

KR: No.

SB: We actually came across a very interesting series of photos that were taken that day, which I'm writing a little write up about right now. So it's, you know, tons of people on the quad with him speaking and stuff.

KR: Yes, he was. No, I wasn't any. And then when Eisenhower, was it Eisenhower?

SB: Before Kennedy.

KR: ... went through Norfolk Southern Railroad here. He spoke at, no, I guess we just saw his train go through.

SB: You saw him go through and he didn't stop.

KR: Yeah, he went through on the railroad.

SB: Was that a year he was campaigning?

KR: Yes. And of course, this is, Tolono is very famous for Lincoln. Because Lincoln came to Tolono to switch trains. And there's a rock up down there that commemorates that.

SB: Oh, that's that marker, I drove by that on my way here.

KR: OK, that's the Lincoln. That's where he switched trains and gave a little talk.

SB: Oh, and that was on his way to Washington.

KR: Right.

SB: Oh, that's interesting. I never knew that. Just all the way down here, huh? I'll have to stop by and see the rock on my way up.

KR: It's got a plaque on it.

SB: I just love learning about that, that kind of that kind of history, you know, of just these things that we walk by and perhaps take them for granted. You know, not, [unintelligible] that Lincoln, Lincoln passed through here.

Mr. Roellig, overall, though, thank you so much for, for sharing your time with sharing your time with me today and speaking with me about your time in Illinois. It's really been something.

KR: Well, there's a lot of things that like in Galesburg, really, I don't remember that much about it because it was new to me, but.

SB: Yeah.

KR: I was changing life, you might say.

SB: Yeah.

KR: And my job was to study and try to get. Knowing that you think of the university as a big place and that everything's going to be so difficult. The class work is going to be so much. And after having been out of high school for four years or more. It's scary.

SB: Yeah. I can see that.

KR: And so you pile yourself into working. More so that you will not fail. And I didn't. I mean, I've got my little honorable medal.

SB: Yeah, what honorable is that?

KR: For grades, yeah.

SB: Oh, for grades. Was that something you were awarded at graduation?

KR: No.

SB: Ah.

KR: No, I don't remember just how that came in. I don't know if I could find it right now or not, I know. It's in the drawer in there.

SB: You still have it after all this time.

KR: Yes.

SB: So that's I guess that's what that's one thing, that's something that sticks with you. You mean you seems like you certainly remember your time at the university fondly.

KR: Yeah. I graduated with honors, but not the bronze tablet.

SB: Oh, they had the bronze tablets at that time.

KR: Yes, my brother's on the bronze tablet.

SB: Is he really? Were they, were the tablets in the library at that time, still?

KR: Yes, I think so.

SB: Yeah, they're still. They're still there now. Yeah. What was, if I might ask, you know, is there a, is there any? Do you have any memories that stand out about your time from your time at up at Urbana? Kind of like listening to the election with your friend, you know, that just stand out that we haven't talked about.

KR: No, I really don't, any particulars.

SB: But it seems like we've talked about a lot of the ones that you have, yeah.

KR: Yeah. Just like today, I was at a meeting of senior citizens at the Farm Bureau building. And the, one of my former students, well, two of them were seated at the same table as I was, and the one was Lin Warfel. I don't know if you've ever heard of Lin Warfel.

SB: No, I don't think so.

KR: He lives out here across the highway a couple miles over. Anyway, he was president of the Parkland College Board and several things.

SB: Oh, yeah.

KR: And we were reminiscing about things that happen at school and, I said, "You reminisce on some of those. You bring up some things that happened that you've forgotten all about." Oh, if I could find that medal on, and go look for it. I don't know. Give me 5 minutes. I'll go see it.

SB: Sure, sure. Take your time.

KR: I'll go see if I've got it.

SB: Let me know if you need a hand. You're good? Yeah.

Looks like you found it.

KR: You ever seen one of those?

SB: This is the first homecoming at the stadium?

KR: Right.

SB: Where did you get it?

KR: When I first came up here, I lived with Mr. and Mrs. Murphy over at Sadorus.

SB: Uh. Uh.

KR: Mr. Murphy was the electrician that wired the stadium back in 1925 or whenever.

SB: Really?

KR: And that was his.

SB: Wow.

KR: And he gave it to me.

SB: What a wonderful gift. Those are very, very cool. We have a whole collection of them at the archives. People that collected them and kept them, things like that. And what is this now?

KR: If I can get it open.

SB: I can, want me to try?

KR: Here it comes.

SB: There you go. What are these here? Oh, this I recognize. Oh, you were in Kappa Delta Pi.

KR: Oh yes, for, but I never did attend anything.

SB: Ah. And what's the one that you have there?

KR: No, this isn't mine. I don't have the one that I thought I had.

SB: Still, that's very cool. And it's always it's always a treat to see one of the Homecoming pins. And we're getting a lot of, we're getting a lot of attention with things like that. Now that the because the stadium is going to be 100 years old.

KR: Right. Yep.

SB: That one's in very good shape too, with Red Grange.

KR: Well, it's probably never been worn.

SB: Oh, he so he probably got it and put it away.

KR: He probably got it and put it away. And yes, it's never doesn't have any, everything's clear in it. Yeah, he was electrician, head electrician on the scoreboard, when the stadium was built.

SB: Oh, so that was one of the first, the very first scoreboard, then yeah.

KR: The first.

SB: Did he ever tell any stories about what working on it was like?

KR: Well, he just said it was his job to get it done.

SB: Yeah. Very, very cool, though. It's like I said, we're getting a lot of, we've had people coming out and we had people coming out and looking at our collection of those, you know, and taking pictures and things. They're doing this fall, it's going to be a lot of, 100 years since the dedication.

KR: Well, they'll probably have something like this coming out.

SB: Yeah, they're well, actually, what they've been doing is we had some people come by that were, I think they're going to like, they might make like reissues or, like, make a new one. That, like, has things like that on it, you know, something commemorative.

KR: Yeah.

SB: So that'll be. That'll be very cool. You know if you're going to come up for another homecoming this fall might be the one to go to.

KR: Yeah. I tell you, I get around so slow though. And climbing steps in the lake.

SB: Oh, yeah.

KR: I went to Unity high school football games last fall. And I can know up those and up in the bleachers. I go about one row up.

SB: Oh, you go one row.

KR: And I went to a basketball game where I had to go up higher and the railing was shaky.

SB: Oh, golly yeah.

KR: I'm walking, all right. But if I've got something I wouldn't hold on to, I'd go up and down steps. I usually want to be sure there's a banister there.

SB: Oh, yeah. You get around quite well for 98.

KR: I keep it going.

SB: You do, yeah.

KR: Like I said, I went to the meeting this morning and.

SB: Do you still? You still drive, right?

KR: Yes.

SB: Yeah. Well before I, before I forget though, I want to just say for the recording, you know, Mr. Roellig, you know, first of all, thank you so much for your time. You know, it's really great to, we've talked for almost 2 hours this time.

KR: We have! [Laughs]

SB: I remember, you told me, "Oh, I don't think we'll talk for that long about college." Well, we did pretty well. It's really great to have your perspective. You know, if I may ask also, do you, do you still keep in touch with people that you went to college with or not as much?

KR: No.

SB: No.

KR: I'm very active in church. I was chairman of the Prime Timer group in the Farm Bureau. For 22 years. And that's a group of, well, we used to have about 80 to 90 people come once a month and have a program and the entertainment and then a meal. And I was chairman of that group for 20 some years. So, I've been outside...

SB: You stay active, yeah.

KR: And then of course, I was with the iron workers for 50 years. And a lot of other things going on that I've worked with.

SB: Yeah. Well, you stay active.

KR: Yeah. I was down in Shelbyville. I have 20 acres down there.

SB: You have 20 acres. That's a lot.

KR: And it's woodland. It's uh, I've got a cabin on it that I built. I've got a 2-acre lake and a half acre lake on it.

SB: So two lakes.

KR: I got 2 lakes, one empties into the other one. And then I've got a road, my property is only 360 feet wide. But it's a half a mile deep.

SB: Oh, so it's like that.

KR: Long. And, I have all wooded land at the back and at one time I had a Christmas tree farm back there. I had to about 4000 trees growing back there.

SB: Oh, wow.

KR: And I've kind of let it grow up, but I've got a road back through it and so, this week, Tuesday, I went down and I picked up all the sticks of stuff and fallen on the road back and then ran the lawnmower. Back then took my chainsaw and cut off all the branches that were so I can drive to the back without any problem.

SB: Well, that's good.

KR: So, I putter around.

SB: I would say that goes a little bit more than puttering, but, yeah, but no, Sir, this is this is just. It's really great. Oh, and I guess I should probably also tell you. I'll do the same thing for this interview that I've done with the one we did for the Library of Congress, where I'll come by and bring you a copy.

KR: Ok.

SB: And then this one actually might well, for I have an interview agreement, if you wouldn't mind. First, let me shut these off. So I'll just say again for the record, Sir, thank you very much. It's really been great, and an hour forty-nine.