

University of Illinois Student Life and Cultural Program
World War II at Illinois Oral History Project
Joe W. Kraus
Bloomington, Illinois
July 7, 2008

START OF TAPE ONE, SIDE A (original interview is a digital audio file dubbed to cassette tape for transcribing purposes)

Chris D'Arpa: This is my backup that in fact actually has been my primary.

Joe Kraus: This is a recorder?

CD: This is recording as well. So each one will be recording.

JK: Just amazing how tiny they can make those things.

CD: Isn't it? And it is so much more reliable and easier to use than this one.

JK: Pretty soon they will have them finger nail sized.

CD: Well you know what they have now is in my laptop I could bring my laptop and record our conversation on it.

JK: That's great.

CD: It is great. Ok this is still paused. Why is that? There we go, ok. So we're moving along here. All right, we are moving along here. Actually if you could talk.

JK: One, two, three, four, five, six, seven, eight, nine, ten.

CD: That's picking you up.

JK: Eleven, twelve.

CD: Put this here and keep an eye on both of these. All right, so...

JK: Fire away!

CD: The way I begin usually is I open the tape... What we have here is we're gathering an archive of oral history interviews with folks who were in some way affiliated with the University of Illinois during World War II or slightly prior to or slightly after World II. To get a sense of what life was like on the homefront and how the war affected life at the University of Illinois in particular. So I'm Chris D'Arpa. I am here in Bloomington, Illinois. And it's Tuesday July 7th and I am talking with Joe Kraus. What was that?

JK: It's the eighth.

CD: It's the eighth?

JK: Um hmm.

CD: My watch is wrong.

JK: No it is seven.

CD: Oh good. Ok.

JK: Why did I get eight in my mind?

CD: So it is July 7th, 2008 and I am speaking with Joe Kraus. Usually I start up these interviews asking folks to state their full name and if they wouldn't mind, their birth date.

JK: My name is Joe W., W is for Walker, Kraus. And my birth date is August 31, 1917.

CD: Can you tell me a little bit about your background, your family.

[telephone rings]

CD: Do you want to answer that?

JK: Not really. It will keep ringing. It's a recording. I can't even get mad at them! I let it ring but it's so loud that it would interfere.

CD: So let me put this...

JK: That might be the solution.

CD: Ok, so I am going to turn this back on. So a little bit about your family background, where you grew up, and your educational background.

JK: I grew up on a farm in Northeast Missouri and when I was fourteen we moved to Canton, Missouri. And there I went to high school and college, Culver-Stockton College. I enjoyed growing up on a farm but I really had no intention to go back to it. And I have often wondered why I didn't have more interest and I guess it's because my father didn't really like it either.

CD: Really?

JK: He was happiest in the winter time when he would tinker around with his tools in the basement where he set up a shop. It wasn't the work that bothered him it just wasn't an interesting thing to do. And after, oh, late in the twenties it was no longer a profitable thing to do. Anyway we moved to Canton and I attended Culver-Stockton College for four years and then came directly to the University of Illinois to enter Library School.

CD: So what year would that have been?

JK: I graduated from college in 1938 and went to Library School in 1939 and I was not able to find employment as a librarian outside of the University largely because of the Draft. I had several interviews that I thought were going along very well until they asked the question, "Well, what's your status with the draft?" Well, I was young and I was in good health, I was 1A. Even after I married it was 1A and so that kept me at the University of Illinois where they were good enough to give me a half time position. I worked at the Reference Desk for two years and then I was given a full time position and with the immense salary that came along with that, I think it 1500 dollars a year, I did what any red blooded American boy would do, I got married. And we lived in Urbana where I finished a Master's Degree in two years. I was working part time and then I was given a full time position in the library running something that was then called the Seven Day Book Room.

CD: Seven day book?

JK: Seven Day Book Room.

CD: Room.

JK: It was just called that because it was the one place where books were checked out for seven days rather than a month or whatever was upstairs. It was really a room used primarily for the Freshman English courses. They had a list of books which they gave to the students and they had to read some of them and write reports on them during the course of the year. So a little library of its own within the huge University of Illinois library. And then Pearl Harbor came along.

CD: Well, let me take you back a little bit. We are jumping ahead. I do want to get a sense of your childhood. You grew up on a farm.

JK: I grew up on a farm.

CD: And you went to public schools in what town in Missouri?

JK: I went to a one room public school. I learned to read early. My mother had been a school teacher.

CD: Ok.

JK: And I can't remember when I didn't read but I am sure there were years when she read to me. So I did very well in public school, the one room public school after I learned to get along other with children. I was an only child.

CD: I was going to ask.

JK: And I was used to having my own way. I could play with my own toys when I wanted to and I discovered that when you go to school things are different! And I think I spent quite a bit of the first year crying but that soon took care of itself. I have very pleasant memories of the school and the many different teachers we had.

CD: What was the range, the grade range of this school and how...

JK: First to Eighth. First grade, one through eight.

CD: And how many children were in it?

JK: Had about twenty or twenty five. The number varied.

CD: And it drew from farms in and around the area of Canton?

JK: It was a German farming community. There was a church that was still active and the school and there had been a kind of a hotel but that was no longer operating by the time I was growing up. And it was no longer German-speaking. I have a catechism that my father used which is entirely in German. So apparently when he went to school some of the classes were taught in German and the Church services were German.

CD: How long had your family farmed this land or lived in that area?

JK: My Great Grandfather came from Germany and he took up land and divided it among his several sons. He had a quarter section but by the time it got down to my father it was down to 180 acres. It was a great place to grow up.

CD: Did it have a name, the German Community?

JK: Etna. E-T-N-A.

CD: E-T-N-A. Had an Italian name for a German...

JK: I have no idea where the name comes from. It certainly had nothing to do with the mountain in Sicily. I've been there too. But it was fun. And one of the interesting things about it was that you heard everybody recite and you couldn't help but pick up information about the grades ahead of you. And I was pushed ahead a grade. I think I skipped the fifth grade not because I was so smart but because I remembered the things I heard the big boys and girls reciting. And so I graduated there after seven years. It was fun.

CD: And then you went on to high school or?

JK: I went to high school in the neighboring town called Wyaconda, W-Y-A-C-O-N-D-A. And I went to high school there for the first year. I rode horseback about five miles to school and back. People find that unusual these days. It wasn't so unusual then. After the end of my freshman year we sold the farm.

CD: Oh!

JK: And moved to Canton and my parents found other employment and I went to what I thought was a big high school. Canton was a town of, I don't know, 3,000 maybe?

CD: Well that's...

JK: But bigger than the one I attended but it too was interesting. And then after high school I attended Culver-Stockton College.

CD: And that was in the same area of Canton?

JK: That's in the same town. It was really one of the reasons for their moving to Canton.

CD: So they wanted you to go to college?

JK: Yes. Give me a chance to go college. And I worked all the time. I worked in the library and then I worked in the bookstore and worked at other things. I worked in the summer session as well as the fall and winter. I suppose I must have a hundred and fifty or a hundred sixty credit hours at Culver-Stockton because I always had to take a course. So I took a lot of things which you probably would not generally take. And that stood me good, really. I had introductory courses in subjects that I really didn't go any further in but that was helpful in library school.

CD: That's what I was going to ask. If you found that built sort of a base that was very useful in an academic library.

JK: Um hmm.

CD: So how did you move from Canton, Missouri and Culver-Stockton College and decide to attend the University of Illinois?

JK: It was because of the head of the library at Culver-Stockton. He was a man. That was a little unusual in those days.

CD: Do you remember his name?

JK: Claude Spencer. He had attended the University of Illinois for two summer sessions. Never went back for his third one to get his Bachelor's degree. That was the old fifth year Bachelor's degree. But he enjoyed running the library and I saw he was having a good time so it occurred to me that might be a good thing to do. And I had a small scholarship awarded by the fraternity I belonged to.

CD: And which fraternity was that?

JK: It was then called Theta Kappa Nu and I think it is now Lambda Chi Alpha. I haven't really kept up with it.

CD: I didn't know they changed their names.

JK: I don't really understand how fraternities work.

CD: I don't either.

JK: I had no more connection with it after graduating from college. At the University of Illinois I had plenty to do without getting very active in any social activities. I was one of the younger people in Library School at that time.

CD: So this was 1938 that you began?

JK: It would be fall 1938.

CD: So you were 21?

JK: Uh huh.

CD: 21, yes.

JK: And a very high percentage... I don't know how many of the people in Library School were people who had taught for a while or done something else. We had a couple of preachers, ex preachers, who didn't find that was really their calling. And I was a little unusual being one who went directly from college into library school. So they were very good to me at Illinois. They saw that I was able to get help financial aid and they overlooked that. They overlooked my naiveté. Which I wasn't really aware of. But I learned a lot and I grew up quite a bit at the University of Illinois.

CD: Let me ask you a couple of questions just to situate this a little more. The Library School was in the Library at the time.

JK: That's right.

CD: And it was on the fourth floor, is that right? The top floor?

JK: Yes, yes.

CD: And do you remember about how many students were in the Library School program?

JK: It was pretty big. Our classes were around the order of twenty or twenty five.

CD: Ok. That helps.

JK: Something like that. And the book selection course included everyone. There was some specialization even then. If you wanted to be a school librarian there were some courses that you took and I was sure I wanted to be academic librarian because it was all I really knew. And there were people in for public library work, along with others who weren't quite sure what they wanted to do.

CD: Right. And where did you live on campus?

JK: I lived on Oregon Street in a rooming house.

CD: In Urbana is that...?

JK: In Urbana. Just a block and half from the school. Very good place. And the second year I got into an apartment with three or four other students and we did our own cooking. One of our members was the Secretary Treasurer, Frank Bertalan who was also in library school.

CD: Oh really. Where you all in library school?

JK: No. Just the two of us. The others included a man who was majoring in mathematics, getting a Master's degree in mathematics education and the fourth one, I can't remember what he was in. I can remember he was a gymnast. That wasn't his major but he was one of these people who could stand and turnover completely just as easily as anything. Wearing ordinary street clothes! You know, most of us would land flat on our heads.

CD: If we were lucky.

JK: The place I lived then would be in the southeast corner of the Krannert Center garage.

CD: It's funny that you say that because one of the people I interviewed, I have already interviewed, I think you were probably at the Library School at the same time as Dena Epstein.

JK: Yep.

CD: I don't remember her maiden name. But she described living in the same area.

JK: We were in the same class.

CD: Oh, ok.

JK: She was a very smart student.

CD: And she still is. She just cancelled her subscription to "Notes". She's been actively keeping up with her profession.

JK: I still read "American Libraries." And I go to the University Library here once and a while and skim through the other library magazines but much of the time I don't know what they are talking about and most of the time I don't care.

CD: Well, what kinds of classes did you take in the Library School at that time and what did you enjoy most about Library School?

JK: I think what I enjoyed most were the teachers. They were individualists. Rosie Phelps taught reference. Rose B. Phelps. She was a, I don't know how to put it, a hard working woman. She had taught in another Library School and when the University of Chicago started offering a PhD she quit her work and got her Doctor's degree and I think she was the only one in the Library School who had a PhD. And I enjoyed her courses. She worked hard. Worked harder than students did. You'd see her over there at eight o'clock at night preparing the lessons for two or three weeks from now. We had a lot of written work and it was very... Looking back it had some of the aspects of a trade school. That's not a popular thing to say but I think it is accurate. In comparison with what library schools do now I think that is probably true.

CD: And elaborate a little bit on what you mean. I don't want to assume that I understand what you mean when you say it had a bit of the aspects of a trade school.

JK: We learned almost every book in Mudge's Guide to reference books. I mean we examined it. We were questioned and tested on it and we were given exercises that made us look up things in those reference books. It was very thorough. The book selection was taught by Anne Boyd who was very easy-going but a demanding kind of teacher. They were all demanding as far as I was concerned and she taught the book selection courses. McDiarmid, E.W. McDiarmid was there in his first teaching years I suspect. He went on to the University of Minnesota and has since retired as Provost of the University but he was just getting started. And the men in the Library School, I think, all sort of modeled ourselves after him. He was our model.

CD: And what was the break down in terms of men and women students? Do you remember? Did you have a sense of it?

JK: I expect about one man to three women. Something like that. More men than you might expect.

CD: More than now!

JK: Is that right?

CD: There are still many more women than men.

JK: That's interesting because in libraries, as I look around, there seem to be quite a few men although they are generally the director.

CD: So did you take cataloging?

JK: Yes I took cataloging. Ethel Bond taught the cataloging courses and she was a great one for absolute accuracy. You know the card, I think we wrote the cards out. We didn't type them and the spacing had to be exactly correct, in centimeters. And if wasn't, the card it came back to you with little red marks on it. There were two graduate assistants who spent most of their time making those little red marks, corrections to our work. Administration, book selection, reference, there must have been something else. I don't know. What I was really interested in was the history of books and libraries but I don't think I got into a course on that until the second year of Master's degree. It's been a long time and I can't remember very well. But in any event instead of going out to a job as a college librarian in 1939 as I hoped to I started on as a half time assistant.

CD: And were you working in the library while you were in school as well?

JK: Yeah.

CD: Which department did you work in?

JK: Reference.

CD: You worked in reference the entire time?

JK: Reference for two years and then the Seven Day Book Room.

CD: Oh, that's right the seven Day Book Room!

JK: That for one year.

CD: Now where was that in the library? Was it near the circulation desk?

JK: It was on the first floor. Can't remember what is there now. It was really in the hallway. Front of it, say the front of it is a T, top of a T, well, this is in the shaft of the T. And it had some other things too. They had books for required reading for physical education. I am not sure if that is still done any more or not.

CD: Well, it sounds a little bit like reserves where people could only check it out for a certain amount of time but little bit longer in your case.

JK: Yeah that's right. The Seven Day Book Room was supposed to be for freshman English but of course other people came in and used it and we had no way of knowing whether they were enrolled in freshman English or not.

CD: So you finished your Master's degree in...?

JK: 1941.

CD: And you started in '38? Ok. So three years.

JK: Three years. One year going to school full time. Two years going to school part-time. And then along came Pearl Harbor.

CD: And you were at Illinois when Pearl Harbor?

JK: Yeah. I was called up by the draft board early in 1941. We had just gotten married and I was not anxious to go into military service so I was able to get that postponed until Pearl Harbor came along and then, of course, all postponements were off. But the University apparently worked out a plan with the draft board so that they could keep all the assistants, the teaching assistants and library assistants and others, until the end of the year. All of us were military equipment and if all had been drafted freshman English classes would have been topsy turvy. Full professors would have had to teach freshman English!

CD: Can't have that.

JK: They had forgotten how to do it I am sure. I learned a lot of things outside of library school just by being around the University. I got somewhat acquainted with T.W. Baldwin who was a Shakespearean scholar. He was one of the bright lights. His daughter became a librarian too and she has since retired. And the Milton scholar whose name was on my tongue just a minute ago. I took his introductory course. In the second, one year in the Master's degree program at that time you could take several courses outside library school and I took full advantage of that. Took a course in the history of education.

CD: Really? Huh.

JK: And the course in Milton and a course in Shakespeare. I picked the professors rather than the subject. They were among the most noted scholars in the Humanities. So I wanted to get acquainted with them and to hear them. They were very interesting. T.W. Baldwin, the Shakespeare scholar, as a regular part of his procedure would read to you the manuscript of his next book. Now that sounds pretty dull to many people but I found it fascinating because it was the first time I really found out how a scholar in literature works. And he would always take time to explain how, of course he did all his research in England, told us about the libraries there and what he could find and what he couldn't find. And the book sellers who specialized in old books. Baldwin was primarily interested in Shakespeare's education and he has a book called, Shakespeare's Little Greek and Less Latin or something like that which is a quotation from one of the plays. So it was a very bookish school, a very bookish course. A lot of students didn't like it very well.

CD: What was the sense in the library among the librarians in that regard? Where people intellectually curious and did they have time, the librarians, to pursue those interests?

JK: There was kind of a barrier between those of us who were assistants and those who were as they would have put it, career librarians. We thought we were career librarians too but we hadn't been in the library long enough. And so I didn't have much interplay with those people.

CD: Really?

JK: Can't really say.

CD: So who supervised you and your work in the library?

JK: Well, the reference department was headed by two women, Alice Johnson and Fanny Dunlap. Fanny Dunlap did all the interlibrary loan for one thing and Alice Johnson taught a beginning course in library science not intended for library science students, but for general students. One of the things I remember from Alice Johnson, she wore glasses which apparently had special unusual kind of lens. When I was sitting at the desk to take on any questions that came along she would look down and say, "Mr. Kraus, there is a boy down there on the last table that had his feet up on the table. Go down and tell him to take them off." And I would look and I couldn't see but I would truck down there getting a little sheepish and tell him to take his feet off the table.

START OF TAPE I, SIDE B

JK: And he did so then I came back. That was a curious thing but she could spot those things.

CD: Did you have a sense of the library as being a very special institution in terms of its collection at that time?

JK: Yes. Although, I think my real appreciation of it came much later. To me it was a place to have some fun. Library school students got together for some social activities. Not many but some. And I couldn't really make a generalization although my impression is that they were all pretty intellectually curious. There was a library organization, University library organization that held meetings once or twice. The interesting thing about working there during the first two years is that the head of the library was Phineas Windsor.

CD: Oh, it was.

JK: And Windsor was held in such high regard by all the ladies that over and over again you would hear them say, "Now Mr. Windsor says..." And whatever Mr. Windsor said that was the truth. You could not get a higher authority. But I owe a good deal to him because although he didn't have fellowships to hand out he divided up library positions into two or sometimes three different positions so more people could go to library school. You could live on half salary. Sounds impossible now but then prices of things were very low.

CD: Did you have a sense of the war coming while you...?

JK: Came up on us so suddenly.

CD: Did it.

JK: And I really didn't. The only thing I had was the draft board nibbling at my heels. When my first wife and I were married we went down to the Ozarks to camp for our honeymoon and while we were there I got a telephone call from my roommate in Urbana saying I had been reclassified 1A.

CD: So when was, that was 1941?

JK: It was 1940. It would have been, it was June 1941. So yeah, we were aware of it and of course everything was a little topsy turvy.

CD: How so?

JK: Weren't really quite sure what was coming up next. I think it had an effect on just about everything going on. Although the classes kept meeting regularly and I am sure professors gave the same lectures that they had given the year before and the younger faculty members filled in for positions that were not filled by career professors. But as far as having a feeling about the war until Pearl Harbor it just seemed to be something very remote. I guess it was my own ignorance. The fact that I was not really keeping up with things as one would be expected to. I mean I knew that Roosevelt and Churchill were having meetings but it didn't occur to me that this would affect me. This is something...

CD: Politics.

JK: Went on a higher, very high level. So I'm a little vague about what to say about the influence it had. I assure you it, the war, was on everybody's mind but I can't remember that it really affected classes, courses. Although it may have had more effect than I was aware of. By that time I think I had taken all the courses and I was writing a thesis. So I was somewhat removed from day to day interaction with members of the faculty.

CD: Did students talk about world news or national news together at all?

JK: Not in library school. No, things went on very much as before. But there always was this shadow over us. We knew we should have known and I think we sensed that something was coming that was going to affect us. But we didn't really accept this as being a reality.

CD: So terrible. It was hard to imagine that. I mean how could imagine something that terrible?

JK: No. The idea that some of the people you were in class with would not be there after the war. That possibility hadn't really sunk in on us.

CD: What about Pearl Harbor. Were you on campus when you heard the news?

JK: I was on campus. I'd gone to a movie in the afternoon. I don't know why. I seldom went. It was Sunday and when I came out the newspapers were full of the news and then I realized that... My recollection of it is really very vague. It was very important to me then but so many other things have happened in the meantime.

CD: Sure. And the movie theatre. Was the movie theatre near campus?

JK: Yeah it is still there. It's on Green Street and they show...

CD: In Urbana or?

JK: It would be in Champaign. The corner of Green and Wright.

CD: Corner of Green and Wright, ok.

JK: Maybe my recollection is wrong. I guess I am wrong. No, we went downtown to go to the movie.

CD: Downtown Champaign?

JK: Downtown Champaign.

CD: And would you have just walked down to Champaign, downtown Champaign?

JK: Yeah. We were young. And of course the movie was cheaper on Sunday afternoon. I was married by that time.

CD: And how did you meet your wife?

JK: We went to high school together in Canton.

CD: Oh, wow!

JK: We were in college together but not in the same class. She took a year off to work and earn some money and then went to school for two years and then went out as an elementary school teacher.

CD: In Missouri?

JK: In Missouri. You could teach if you had sixty semester hours at that time but of course you had to go to summer school to show that you were keeping it. So she taught and went to summer school. The place she taught turned out to be the place where I had gone to high school. Which was sometimes good and sometimes embarrassing because she heard things about me as a youngster and not all of it was flattering.

CD: Were you able to go home periodically from University of Illinois and if so how did get home?

JK: By bus. It was a fairly long ride. I remember we always had to change buses in Peoria and then again in Quincy and then sometimes my parents were able to drive to Quincy to pick me up there. But it was a long trip. Didn't cost much and it was the only way you could go. There's no... Well I guess you can go to... You could go by train but it would have been complicated. There is no east west line. You would have had to gone to Chicago or St. Louis.

CD: So you were finally drafted, is that right? And you served in Europe or?

JK: I served entirely in the United States.

CD: You did!

JK: I was drafted, well, a whole bunch of us went into service in June 1939, no it would have been '41. Yeah, June 1941 and there were two or three bus loads of people all...

CD: From the University of Illinois?

JK: Yeah. And we all went to Peoria and that was the reception center. We were examined to see if we were physically fit and of course we all were. They weren't too particular by that time and then we went down to Scott Field in Bellville, Illinois. And that was the stopping point for something else but while we were there they had a call for a clerk-typist. And that was one of my qualifications so they pulled me out and sent me to work for the Signal Detachment. Signal Detachment was a small group of perhaps fifteen or twenty men and they ran the telephone system on base and the telegraph system and I worked in a little warehouse. That wasn't very interesting so I applied for Officer Candidate School, as soon as I could. I was enlisted then for about six months, no a little longer. Then I went to Miami Beach to the Air Force Officer Candidate School. This is the Air Force, the Air Force was just beginning to emerge as a unit in itself, so they had to borrow people from other parts of the service and they were anxious to get new Second Lieutenants. Well, they overdid it a little bit and when I graduated and got my commission there were no jobs really. They didn't know what to do with us. They had created more Second Lieutenants than could be called for. So I hung around Miami Beach. I taught some courses in OCS. The Army always felt that if you had completed a course you were qualified to teach it. Then I went to a basic training center which was curious because I had never had basic training myself but that didn't matter, I got by. Later I was put in charge of a small library that served the base unit whatever it was at Miami Beach.

CD: In Miami Beach?

JK: Yeah. And that was fairly interesting. It was better than standing around on the drill field where most of the time I was pretending to be busy when I really didn't have anything at all to do. Had a lot of that in the Army and you had to go along with it. There was no alternative.

CD: And was your wife with you throughout this or did she...?

JK: She was with me, of course, we lived together in Urbana when I was in school and then she went home to Canton and went back to school teaching and took a job in a little town called Palmyra, Missouri which fortunately was conveniently located to Belleville, Illinois. So we were together quite a bit.

CD: Oh good!

JK: Until I got ambitious and went to Office Candidate School. Then she joined me in Miami Beach and we were there for about a year and then I sent her home again because I was just sure that I would be sent overseas. You know the first group had already gone and put in a period of time and were coming home and I hadn't so it seemed perfectly logical that they would choose me to do something overseas. They never did.

CD: At this point, this is '42, '43, is that right? Are you following the war now? Is there sort of daily conversation about the fighting and the progress of the various battles?

JK: You mean then or?

CD: While you are in Office Candidate School. While you are in the Army slash Air Force.

JK: Although we were generally kept busy the Office Candidate School was not so much a matter of learning something as it was a matter of weeding people out. You were kept under stress all the time. You had to sit on the edge of your chair at meal time. There were certain rules about what you could do and what you could not do. You had to mark where you were going on a device which lay on your bed. We were living in hotels in Miami Beach. And if you failed to have that marker in the right place, if it showed that you were out for drill and actually you were in class that was a demerit. And some poor Second Lieutenant had to go around and check all those things. Terrible just terrible waste of time. You wonder how in the world we won the war, well, we won it because there were some people who really were soldiers. I wasn't one of them. I never complained about it and the only thing I ever volunteered for was the OCS and I went to that not because I was career minded for military service but because they made enough money that my wife and I could live together. And I sent her home in 1941. Well she was pregnant for one thing and I was sure I was going to be sent overseas. And then I was sure since I didn't go overseas surely I would go to Japan and be part of the Army of Occupation there. And I was not. I don't know why. I ended up at Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio.

CD: In Dayton.

JK: And I was in charge of a group of libraries there. Finally they found the right number and that was interesting although not the kind of thing I really wanted to do.

CD: A group of base libraries? Libraries on base?

JK: Um hmm.

CD: So there is more...?

JK: They were technical libraries.

CD: Ok.

JK: The recreational libraries, I don't know how many, I am sure there were some under some other command.

CD: Ok. So when did you get out of the service and what do you remember about the end of the war?

JK: I got out in... Isn't it strange? You'd think you would never forget that date.

CD: Actually I think a lot of people deliberately forgot it.

JK: Yeah.

CD: My father among them.

JK: Probably... Must have been 1944.

CD: So before the end, really before the end of the war in '44.

JK: Wasn't really so it must have been later than that.

CD: Well, maybe if we worked back the other way. What did you do when you left the service?

JK: I went back to University of Illinois.

CD: And did you have to apply?

JK: They held a job for me.

CD: Oh, they held a job for you, ok.

JK: And fortunately they did. As it turned out the fact that I had returned to Illinois made it possible for me to do much better on retirement pay than it would have had I gone to another job because I received credit for the military service. I received some credit for all the years in between. I had to buy into at a very low rate. It was based on my salary and you can imagine what my salary was in 1943. Yeah 1943.

CD: So when you came back after being away did the campus seem different than you remembered? Did the campus seem different? Did the library, the town seem different?

JK: Actually I came back and taught in the Library School for, and this is very interesting, they set up a special curriculum for veterans in the Library School which would enable them to get through the year in much shorter time I was about the same age as those people and it was a lot of fun really. We consolidated some courses. I can't really tell you which ones they were.

CD: Do you remember what you taught. Probably reference.

JK: I taught reference, administration. Library school had changed during the war.

CD: Do you want me to hold that? Is the microphone getting?

JK: No, I am just fiddling with it.

CD: That's ok.

JK: I left the Army from Wright Field in Dayton, Ohio and Betsy lived with me there in Dayton, Ohio. We had our first son by that time. You were released from the Army according to points and you had so many points for each month I think it was. But if you served overseas then you received double. If you were in a combat zone maybe it was triple the number of points. So I really got out much earlier than I expected to. I thought I might be around for another year because I didn't really have the points but I think the truth in the matter was they didn't need me! And saw no reason to keep people like me hanging around drawing a pretty good salary and not really accomplishing very much. So I went back to the University of Illinois and taught this course, Veteran's library school course.

CD: Were you invited back or had you stayed in touch with people there?

JK: I stayed in touch with them.

CD: You did. People in the Library and in the Library School?

JK: I was technically on leave.

CD: Ok.

JK: It was a very loosely thing because no one knew when you would be back or whether or not everybody did get back, of course.

CD: Was Windsor still head of the library?

JK: No they had changed several times by that time. Carl White was Director when I came back. Then there was another Director whose name I can't remember. Carl White was only there for a few years and then went to Columbia. And I didn't really know him well at all.

CD: When was Downs head of the library? I am assuming you were there when he was.

JK: No. He was in North Carolina. That was his home state and then he went from North Carolina to New York University and from New York University came to Urbana. So I didn't really get acquainted with him until a good many years later when I had come back to Bloomington. After the war and then after my service at the University I was looking for jobs and this time they weren't concerned about the draft board so I found one. I went to Westminster College in Missouri.

CD: Oh, in Fulton?

JK: And I was there for a couple of years then I went down to Tulane University as assistant librarian. I was there for four years. Then I went to Virginia, Harrisonburg, Virginia.

CD: Oh, sure.

CD: Beautiful spot.

CD: Yeah.

JK: And we stayed there for ten years. Our two boys pretty much grew up there. Small town.

CD: Mennonite. Huge Mennonite community.

JK: Mennonite there is an Eastern Mennonite College now Eastern Mennonite University. And one of my staff members was a Mennonite so I got well acquainted with them. They are great people. They are old orders. Wore the black hat. I guess they wore white.

CD: I think its white, isn't it?

JK: I can't remember whether there's a difference in, I believe unmarried Mennonite women wore the white cap.

CD: Oh, I didn't know that.

JK: I am not sure though. But that was a great ten years and I probably would have stayed there except that my sons were reaching college age and we really didn't have the money to send them to college. My older son was a very good student and I wanted him to go to the best college we could find and so I started looking for a job in a University. In the meantime I had come back to the University of Illinois for a year and completed my residency.

CD: For? Oh, ok. Your residency for?

JK: For a PhD.

CD: For a PhD, ok.

JK: And took the language examines and got a dissertation approved.

CD: **And what was your dissertation topic?**

JK: It was on the subject, it was really a subject analysis of the colonial college libraries. I'll show you a copy of it before you go.

CD: **Ok.**

JK: I had to find something that I could work on at home and as it turned out I could do this because I could get microfilm copies of the catalogues that Harvard, Yale, and Princeton had printed for use of their students.

CD: **Great.**

JK: I don't know why no one had hit on that subject before because it seemed so obvious. It was a well organized unit in itself. Hang on a minute.

CD: **Ok.**

JK: Bring a copy of it in.

CD: **I am getting a copy of the dissertation. Oh, look at this! This is so familiar looking and happy.**

JK: It was never published in that form but I published a lot of articles from it.

CD: **A subject analysis. Thelma Eaton was your advisor?**

JK: Hmm?

CD: **Thelma Eaton was your advisor?**

JK: Yeah.

CD: **And wasn't her area classification?**

JK: No library history.

CD: **Is it history?**

JK: Um hmm. And the minor was history of education.

CD: **But Eaton's area was library history too?**

JK: Yeah.

CD: **I just came across an article that she did. You know many of the publications of the Library School are being digitized and being made available for free through digital repository through the University of Illinois and the article I found of hers was on classification.**

JK: She taught that too.

CD: She did too.

JK: But I think she really liked history books best.

CD: And what was she like?

JK: Sort of formidable until you got to know her.

CD: Was she really?

JK: Yeah but she and I got along very well. I think because I did well in the subject that she was interested in. My Master's thesis was also a history of a publishing firm, Copeland and Day. I don't know how much you know about this but there was a movement in fine printing in the 1890s and this had never been exploited by anyone really. The first one who wrote it was a book on Stone and Kimbal, a Chicago publisher, by Sidney Kramer. As it happened...

CD: Sidney Kramer. Why do I know that name?

JK: I don't know.

CD: Is it Kramer books?

JK: Yeah.

CD: Ok.

JK: I don't think he is living.

CD: No.

JK: As it happens Sidney Kramer was at the University of Chicago as a student and Mrs. Kramer was a student at the University of Illinois. I don't know quite how that worked. Since we seated alphabetically by Kraus and Kramer we were set side by side our desks were side by side so I got well acquainted with her. In fact I think she really got me through the cataloging courses.

CD: Do you remember her first name? It's ok if you don't, I just...

JK: Of course I know, I just can't call it up. [Miriam Kramer]

CD: Yes.

JK: Isn't that something.

CD: All right.

JK: I'll think of it after you go on.

CD: Right.

START OF TAPE 2, SIDE A

CD: So Sidney Kramer was affiliated with... It's such a small world that you all occupied at that time because I think his name came up in the interview with Dena, Dena Epstein. I think his name came up in that interview as well.

JK: He was a librarian first before he decided... He had been in bookselling business before and went to Chicago on a fellowship went out to Arizona State University and was Director of the Library there for very few years and finally decided to heck with library work what I really like is being a bookseller. So that's when he went to Washington and set up Kramer Books.

CD: Now how did you get interested in publishers? Where did that...?

JK: Anne Boyd's course in book selection. There was a unit in that. We had a course on publishing and she taught it. Yeah, that's what got me started. That was the other course I was trying to think of. That was the subject that interested me from the very beginning and I have always played around with it. I have a book on Copeland Day and another one on a Chicago publisher which I'll show you before you go home. And that's really been my field of scholarship. I haven't done much although I have been an administrator all this time. I haven't created many new worlds in library administration. I am not sure that there are any.

CD: Now did Thelma Eaton finish out her career at the University of Illinois?

JK: I bet she did.

CD: She did, ok.

JK: She was a very active person, busy. And she was I expect a little impatient with students who were not equally interested in the subject. But I thought she was great. I have no idea where she went in retirement someplace west, I think.

CD: Oh, really? And I saw Robert Downs on your committee as well how did that happen?

JK: Well, I don't know. I didn't really ask for him but I think maybe Thelma Eaton may have suggested it because Downs' name opened all kinds of doors. Downs was the equivalent of Phineas Windsor. I mean Windsor was here then there were a bunch of Directors in between then Downs was here and people would quote Downs the same way twenty years ago they had quoted Windsor. I find that hard to understand because what he wrote, he knew a tremendous amount, and much of it is not really worth publishing. It's not that's bad he just rehashed what other people have already done. But a very hard working man and a very... After I came back here and we got on a first name basis he was a very interesting and good companion. There was always a little distance. He kept a distance between himself and students.

CD: So when you came back to Illinois for the PhD was your social life different?

JK: Yeah it certainly was. I came back by myself.

CD: Oh, you did?

JK: We had two boys and I didn't want to pull them out of school. So I came back and lived on as little as one can live on for a year. I think I had five thousand dollars from the college where I was working then I was free from out-of-state tuition because of the fellowship I received from the University but still it was financially very tight. So there was no social life.

CD: And tell me again, and I am sorry, what year would this have been that you came back to finish the residency for the PhD?

JK: It was in the 1950s. Probably 1958.

CD: Ok.

JK: Because...

CD: You had already been at Harrisonburg for awhile.

JK: I was still at Harrisonburg then came back here and wrote the dissertation in two years which I think set a new record. Most people who went back to school as I did never got around to doing a dissertation because it's hard to do you know.

CD: Yes.

JK: I did it. I worked on it from 6:30 to 9:30 and from 6:30 from 9:30 everyday.

CD: Both ends of the day. And did you send drafts through the mail back to Ms. Eaton and the rest of your committee?

JK: Back to Thelma and she read them all. She was very helpful to me. At least she didn't stand in the way, ever.

CD: That's great.

JK: Pushed me along and I suspect she suggested that Downs should be chairman of the committee just because if Downs said this man's all right he is all right. He was that highly regarded.

CD: Was he? The campus when you came back after the war and after working for some were there... I understand because Illinois was also a training campus for soldiers that there was this housing built after the war for military troops, not military families but veteran's families.

JK: Veteran's housing. They were old barracks.

CD: They were still on campus?

JK: They had been chopped up instead of being long dormitories they chopped them up into small apartments. And we lived in one.

CD: And where were they on campus?

JK: Out towards the football field. I am not sure what is there now. Sure some building.

CD: Some building probably.

JK: But it was not bad. It was easy walking distance from the University. Part of the time I was teaching, I guess the whole time I was teaching in the Library School then. So I didn't have to be at the library from eight to five. I was available when I first started looking for jobs and finally found one when I moved to Westminster College in Missouri. And it was a nice school. We enjoyed being there but the library wasn't going anyplace. I liked the people there, liked the president.

CD: Isn't that where Churchill...?

JK: Yeah but that was the year before I came.

CD: Was it?

JK: Yeah but I can tell you I heard a lot about it because I imagine they still talk about it.

CD: **They do. I think there is a monument to him there.**

JK: There is a monument there and there is a chapel. One of the more recent presidents saw a chapel in London that was to be demolished and he arranged for it to be taken down stone by stone and moved to Missouri and re erected just off the college campus. It's a, I don't know what they call it. I don't think Churchill's name is associated with it but it's a tourist drawing place. After just two years at Westminster I went down to Tulane University in New Orleans. Was there as assistant librarian for four years.

CD: **So this would have been in the early fifties?**

JK: Yeah. Before fifty I guess. And then I was there probably, well, I got the dates from before.

CD: **Right.**

JK: And then from then I went up to Virginia.

CD: **And where did you go after Virginia? After Harrisonburg?**

JK: Kansas.

CD: **Kansas?**

JK: Kansas State University.

CD: **In Emporia?**

JK: No.

CD: **No.**

JK: This is in Manhattan.

CD: **Manhattan, ok.**

JK: Anyone from Manhattan would be highly offended at that because Emporia was an old teacher's college.

CD: **Ok.**

JK: And Kansas State was always the land grant school. It's engineering and agriculture.

CD: **And agriculture.**

JK: But they gave PhD's in history and English and other subjects. It was a fun place. It was growing well, growing fast.

CD: **And so that would have been the late fifties early sixties, right?**

JK: And I guess that was it.

CD: Did you always stay in touch... Were you active in ALA and did you or?

JK: Not terribly active I was more active in the ACRL.

CD: ACRL.

JK: And I was editor of series of studies that they put out, ACRL monographs. And in fact I published in one of them. But I never really was active in ALA. It was too big I wanted to hear all the conferences but it seemed to me that it was run by public libraries and they weren't particularly anxious to include college and university libraries. And then to make it even more of a separation than the, what's the organization of the large university libraries?

CD: It isn't ACRL?

JK: Anyway Kansas State wasn't among them.

CD: Oh, ARL.

JK: Association of Research Libraries.

CD: Research libraries, right. It is too close to ACRL.

JK: Sort of interesting, the University of Kansas was a member of that organization.

CD: ARL.

JK: But Kansas State was not. Partly because of the size of the library. If you are a technical school you don't have as many books. What you need is long runs of the "Short Horned Journal" and the journal of the American Chemical Society and things of that sort. But I enjoyed every one of my posts.

CD: And did you retire from Kansas State?

JK: No.

CD: You didn't. And you came back to Illinois?

JK: Angle it.

CD: Ok.

[background noise]

JK: You could take that if you want to.

CD: Oh, thank you.

JK: I am not quite sure.

CD: So you did. You came back.

JK: I came back here. I didn't answer it quite right.

CD: That's ok.

JK: My reason for coming here was somewhat strange. It was not really a lateral move that Kansas State was probably more of a university than Illinois State was but I had always wanted and envied the people who were able to start a university library from scratch. And there were a few jobs in Florida where that was happening.

CD: This would have been in the early sixties? Yes, ok.

JK: But none of them came along at a time when I could take advantage of it. So this looked to me like a good opportunity because I could see that the school had grown from, oh I don't know, it wasn't much bigger than Illinois Wesleyan.

CD: Really.

JK: But there were competitive schools and it had grown very fast and it seemed to me that this was a place where you had to change a good college library into a university library and to do it pretty quickly. So it was fun to plan a new building. To go out recruiting staff members and to organize them and the old staff members into a different kind of pattern than they were used to. Didn't go real smoothly. Not everyone was in favor of it but it was fun.

CD: That is so interesting.

JK: Yeah. I think from enjoyment this was the best job I've had.

CD: And was funding there for you? Did you have to really negotiate with the state for funds to do this or was their budget sufficient?

JK: Money was plentiful at that time, oddly enough. Not true now. And it wasn't true during the whole period I was there but for about ten years it just seemed to me that they couldn't spend enough money on higher education. So I was able to take advantage of it. And prices were low. That library building which I consider my own was put up for eight million dollars.

CD: Oh.

JK: And that was low even considering the inflation that's taken place. It was supposed to be ten or twelve million dollars but it came at a time when their simply wasn't much business and the bids on it were very satisfactory.

CD: Do you still get over there? Do you go?

JK: Oh yeah. I go every, maybe not every week but every two or three weeks.

CD: And do you come in to Champaign Urbana at all any more?

JK: I go to concerts at Krannert Center.

CD: Do you really? Good.

JK: Yeah. I drive over and spend the night. Drive back the next morning. I used to drive back at night but my sons discouraged me from that and I decided it was not a good idea because when you come out of a concert you're sort up in the air.

CD: Yes.

JK: Feeling great and that's not a good time to riding, driving on a dark night.

CD: Now how do you know Don Krummel since he's the person who put me in touch with you?

JK: When did I first meet Don Krummel? He was not on the faculty at any time when I taught there. I have no idea who first introduced us. I invited him to come over and give a lecture here. I set up a lecture series in honor of my assistant director, Bryant Jackson. So it's the Jackson lecture series. So I asked Don to come over and give one of them. I guess I just knew people who had taken his courses.

CD: Right.

JK: I can't remember the first time we meet. Strange. He was the second one, the first man to come was the librarian at Newberry and I guess Don was the second.

CD: Maybe it was through the librarian at the Newberry that you heard about Don Krummel.

JK: Maybe. Could be.

CD: Because he didn't have a...

JK: He was at Newberry.

CD: Right.

JK: That's right.

CD: [19]60-68, I think.

JK: Of course I was at Newbury quite a bit myself.

CD: Were you?

JK: On research. So I know that building pretty well and a few of the staff members. I did know them.

CD: Well, it is a great resource.

JK: It's a great library. Oh, we had the Director of Library who is not a librarian come to Illinois. The one before, the present one is a librarian, but I can't remember who he is.

CD: I don't know the names.

CD: Can't remember the names. The mind grows foggy as you get older.

CD: Well...

JK: You don't think of these things very often.

CD: I am impressed with all of you. Everyone I have talked with I have been so impressed with what, the details of what you are able to remember and how it all gets pieced together. It's very interesting.

JK: I am not sure whether I am really giving you much background.

CD: Well, I am always surprised. I always come back to the Archives and there is a young undergraduate in History who is transcribing all these interviews and in some ways he has an even better understanding of what's covered in the interviews because he pays more attention, he pays a different kind of attention than I am paying. And he's been very enthusiastic about all of them.

JK: Good.

CD: And I come back thinking, "Well, I really tried meeting them and it was a great conversation but what do we have?" And Dan comes in, Dan and John who is another fellow involved in this project and say, "All these were great interviews there is so much here." So it's surprising.

JK: I hope I have given you something.

CD: I think you have and I think I can release you from that microphone. Where is stop? Here we go.