

Oral History Interviews, Reunion Weekend 2007

**Interview with Richard Boya, class of 1952
Interviewed by Julia Stringfellow
John G. Strange Commons, Main Hall
Interview #1 for June 16, 2007**

[Start: 00:00:00]

1. Could you please state your name?

My name is Richard N. Boya.

2. And what year did you graduate from Lawrence?

1952.

3. And what was your degree in?

My degree was, I had a Speech Drama major and a Spanish major and an English minor.

4. And why did you choose to attend Lawrence?

Well, I was born in Appleton and went in the service in World War II. When I came back it seemed like the logical thing to do. My brother preceded me at Lawrence, he was the class of 1950. So I went here and I was a townie for four years.

5. Was it an easy transition going from high school to college?

Mine of course had four years in between my high school and college and was a very difficult transition for me because I'd been on a submarine for two and a half years and didn't have much opportunity for a lot of reading and things like that.

6. All right, and you had brought some notes and some stories to share.

I thought about it after we discussed a couple of things last night. One of the things I remembered when I told you the story about the student body waiting for us on the return from Coe College with our undefeated football team, and then I found out that the only other time that this has happened where the student body welcomed back a team was the winning College Bowl team, that was in the 1960s sometime I believe. So that was something else that was interesting.

I went back and I remembered a number of things about Homecoming, seems to me it was a very big deal for Lawrence in those days. And we used to have a Convocation every Thursday, we were required to attend the Convocation. And they took attendance so if you weren't in your seat...but we had a lot of the faculty would get involved in

Homecoming skits and they were absolutely a riot, you know I remember some of those skits and they were performed beautifully and it really made for a wonderful weekend. Talk about building up to the bonfire on Friday nights, and these effigies I told you about last night too, where all of the townspeople in Appleton really felt a part of Lawrence and I don't know, many people are aware of Lawrence, of course it's been here for so long. But you don't know how many really understand what Lawrence is all about and how important it is to the community. So I always felt that the more you could get people involved, the local people involved, there are many that would help you out financially or hiring people, well, all kinds of things like that.

7. What were some of the effigies of that were done during Homecoming weekend?

It depended of course on the team they were playing against but usually they would like to get Ripon. But they had actual motors in that were made so parts moved you know. I can't remember any specific ones right now, but they were just outstanding. They had a competition of course among the fraternities and sororities, winners were selected at Homecoming and we had a Homecoming queen and the effigy winners were announced and that type of thing. But there was a lot of excitement and I always felt that helped, especially the new students get involved on campus with things such as this. And of course you had Rush time with the fraternities.

But another thing that we did, I don't know if they're doing it now or not, but we had student elections for the student body president in those days. And you talk about interesting, about having fun. I can remember one specific one where the candidate actually hired a limousine and he had some of his buddies dress up as FBI agents with dark glasses on and he pulled up in front of the chapel at Convocation when they were going to have their speeches, you know to "vote for me" and everything. And they came in and they were around with the dark glasses and the hats on and it was just a lot of fun. It seemed to me there were a lot of activities such as that that really lent itself well to the type of academic discipline you needed also. And you learned how to spend your time wisely. Even as a day student I remember with football practice and basketball practice and I was involved with Spanish Club.

And then I remember the football players were in a style show at the Rio Theater one time. And I remember the coach got madder than heck at me, I was the captain. He was a different type of coach, he was really high-strung, you know. But we were modeling on a Thursday night down at the Rio Theater you know and he heard about it. Boy, he called me in on Friday and I said, "Hey coach, we were just trying, people needed help and I thought some of the guys could help." And he got over it, of course. I think he was trying to say football's so very important, et cetera, et cetera.

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8. What was the name of the football coach?

Bernie Heselton. He was here from 1938 until about 1963, 25 years. In fact it was 25 years, we had a big shin-dig for him. He was very gracious in that way because Ron Roberts came in as the new football coach and was an assistant to Bernie. And Banta Field, the first time it was opened was in 1965, and Bernie relinquished his role as coach and let Roberts start with the new stadium, which I thought was very nice of Bernie because he had been so successful, he was on the downgrade a little bit, Lawrence football was going downhill. It was a very nice gesture on his part to allow Ron Roberts, who did a great job by the way, coming in, was a great guy.

And one other thing was the Winter Weekend, they used to have a Winter Weekend in February. We'd go up to Potawatomi State Park in Door County. And I remember one night, see, being a town student we had a little more freedom than the students here. But when the girls went up there, we had skiing and tobogganing and we had a lot of fun. But we would drive up, the boys from town. And I remember one night we all went out to dinner and I was involved with a quartet at that time. Joe Hopfensperger, who was a teacher here and went up to Bjorklunden for 14 years, was the first director of Bjorklunden and was a drama professor at Lawrence, was in our choir. And Jim Campbell, class of '49, he's a doctor of psychology right now, and Eugene Pete was a Phi Beta Kappa at Lawrence, the class of '50 I believe. So we were all up there and we got to singing at a bar after we had had some dinner and a lot of the girls from Lawrence were there. All of a sudden we looked at the clock and oh boy, they had to be back in by eleven or twelve, I forget exactly. We got them in the cars and we got them back and we were one minute late. Monday morning President Pusey had us all in his office and we didn't know what to expect, but being the kind of guy he was he just said, "Maybe there was a little overreaction here," he said, "Tell me, what happened?" So we told him what happened and there was no problem there, it was a lot of fun.

But the Winter Weekend was a good time to break up February, it was cold, we were on different schedules in those days, we were on a semester basis really. By the time February came around with all the cold weather and everything, you were looking forward to an opportunity to do something like that.

9. What were some of the activities that were held during the Winter Weekend, was there skiing and curling?

Broomball was big in those days you know, if you couldn't skate or ski you could get out on the ice and get teams and a broom and a small ball, like on an ice rink. Oh, and the flying saucers, sliding down the hill, having races with that. And ice skating of course and skiing. And tobogganing, those were the big things.

That sounds like fun.

It was a great time. There was another place out by Greenville, Van Dine it was called. They had a toboggan slide with a big jump at the end of it. I remember we went out there with a bunch of kids and a young lady from Chicago that I was dating at the time. She fell off the toboggan and oh, we were sort of worried about that, but fortunately everything

turned out okay. But that was a lot of fun, we did a lot of tobogganing and things like that.

That sounds like fun.

We didn't have much money in those days. I was on a GI Bill at Lawrence as many of the guys were in those days. And the place was packed, we had about 1400 students here when I was here, it was right after the war. With the GI Bill and with everything turning, were just getting started after the war. So you sort of made your own fun, you did things that didn't cost a lot of money and very few of us had cars and that type of thing.

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It kind of forces you to think outside of the box and be creative about what to do.

Absolutely, right.

10. I was wondering if you could tell again the story about the football team coming back to campus and being welcomed by the people in the chapel.

The football season, the year before when we were juniors, was not a very good season, we lost a lot of close games. But anyway, as elected captain for the next year I made a commitment to myself that we were coming back in good shape, et cetera, et cetera. And we did, we came back. But anyway we were never behind in the season and we won every game. So a week before we went down to Coe, the last game of the season, it had to be in the twenties or even below that, it was cold up here for practicing. But we got on the bus on Friday as we always did and drove down to Dubuque, Iowa, worked out there on a Friday, went down to Cedar Rapids, Iowa, played Coe, and then we came back right after the game. We beat them 26-7 so we were all pretty excited about a successful season, one of eighteen teams in the nation who was undefeated. And we got back, it was about 1:30 or so in the morning on Sunday morning, and we always stopped at the Alexander Gym, took off all our equipment and put it away. Then the bus would take us, it used to be down the river, the College Avenue bridge wasn't there then. So anyway we came back and instead of stopping near the quad where everyone usually got off, we went over right in front of the chapel and there were a couple of torches that were lit. And we were trying to figure out what was going on, 'cause we were pretty groggy because it was about an eight hour drive from Cedar Rapids home. So we were all pretty pooped. So anyway they said, "Come on," and we followed the torches in and the place was packed with all the students and everything and we got a resounding applause, and I spoke to the group and the captain of the cross country team spoke to the group and it was really an unexpected type of thing. But it was a wonderful experience for all of us and we were pleased with the response we got.

That was a nice welcome back.

Oh, it was great.

11. Well, were there any traditions on campus that you participated in, like the ROCK or annual festivals besides Winter Weekend?

I guess that being a town student I was not here all the time and probably missed out on some of the things, although they really included us in all the activities. I can remember being asked to a lot of the fraternity functions and in the spring of the year, the fraternities I think really vied to see who could have the best party. In fact talking to Paul Rosenheimer at lunch, he was saying that their fraternity tried to figure out a new entrance each year, through a window or make them believe the fraternity house was a sewer. And they used to come up with a different bit every year and it was unbelievable. And they would have great parties, costume parties, that type of thing. So that was one thing. And I was in a play in the Spanish Club, "La Corbata Roja," I wore a red tie. Kathleen Joyce was the Spanish teacher in those days, just a lovely, lovely lady. And I just couldn't turn her down, she asked me to be in the plays and I said, "Sure."

And then being a Drama major I did a lot of work. I was a stage manager for the "House of Bernarda Alba" which was an all female cast. I used to thank Ted Cloak for that, I said, "I sure met a lot of ladies." And we started out at the Union, that was the first year the Union was here it was 1951-52. And they had "The Taming of the Shrew" downstairs, and I was a lighting director for that. So I think this is the wonderful thing about a liberal arts school, is that there are so many opportunities to get involved in so many areas. I know when I left here, I was head football coach at Wayland Academy down in Beaver Dam, Wisconsin, and assistant basketball coach and lived in the dorm with 95 guys and taught five classes, and I thought I'd been busy here. But I really felt confident, I was not afraid to go into teaching Spanish, for example, because I feel the type of education I got here stood me in good stead. I enjoyed it.

And eventually I got out of teaching and went into the fundraising field and that was what I really enjoyed. I started the Planned Giving Program here at Lawrence which is an extremely successful program right now. In 1968 I lobbied Curtis Tarr for two years, he was president at the time, and I said, "Curtis, you've got to get this type of program going because this is where the money is and it's going to be the salvation for independent colleges and universities." So finally he said, "Okay, you wore me out, come in and start the program." So I did, I started the Founders' Club and now it's really going great guns and I couldn't be prouder of going after Curtis. He was a big man, you know, he was about 6'6" or something.

[00:15:39]

Oh wow, I didn't know he was that tall.

Yes, he was, he was a great guy.

12. Well, what were, besides the Spanish professor and Bernie Heselton, who were some other professors you had that really made a big difference?

Well, Ted Cloak really, he used to read in class and he was just, he could get you so interested in something. And I was part of the Attic Theatre when that first started, Ted Cloak and Zoe, his wife at the time, were the main instigators, but what a superb individual. And George Walter of course, I mean he would take a bunch of us down to Milwaukee, we went down there one time to watch one of the kids from Lawrence who was boxing in the Golden Gloves. And then we went to the track, and he knew every good restaurant in the country. He loved food. In fact, he was a forest ranger in Glacier Park during the summer and he would go back there. My brother and Joe Hopfensperger and I went out there and spent some time with him. I stopped in Helena, Montana, shortly before he died and I had a very nice visit with him. But he was outstanding. And Griffiths in Psychology and I can't think of some of the names now, the teachers were just outstanding. And they were boosters of athletics, they were boosters of the drama department, they all seemed to jive very well with other aspects, other disciplines in the school.

13. Well what was the overall relationship like between the administration and the faculty and students? Because it sounds like they were all very close.

There was such a small administration, it was really amazing with the president and Ralph Watts was the business director and Marshall Hulbert was in admissions and everything. But I mean they were available, it was amazing and I remember when we left going down to Coe for that final game that season, I remember Dr. Pusey came out on the football field, first time that I can remember he was ever out there. And he came into the huddle, he called us all in, you know, and he came over, he was almost dumbstruck, he couldn't figure out what to say to us, you know. And he was such a great guy, I mean, when I look back on the presidents I got to know quite well, Dr. Pusey and Doug Knight and Curtis Tarr, just outstanding people. I met Dr. Pusey in New York City in, it must have been in the 1980s, and I hadn't seen him since he came back for the dedication of Banta football field. He was at the Foreign Relations League, I remember that, and I was outside and I saw him come out of the building and I walked over and he said, "Hi Dick, how are you?" He had a fantastic memory for names, you could ask anybody who was around at that time and he knew all of them. Again, that was a closeness between the administration and the students. And you could see him at any time you wanted to almost, if you had any questions or things like that.

14. That's great. What were some popular hang-out spots for students while you were here at Lawrence?

Oh, we had a number of those, let's see. Bill's was a popular one right down the street here. And then there were a few places where we would go dancing. I remember the Flagstone was a place and the Quarry, there was a place called the Quarry, there was a big quarry west of town on Prospect Avenue right straight out. It was a place with a lot of swimming, they had a very deep quarry out there, but they had a nice place too. And then the girls, we had Sadie Hawkins Day. I remember the girls would invite us on. And then the sororities, some time in the spring, they would invite us and we would wait for those

opportunities, you know, everything was on the girls. And here we are, we have very few bucks, we couldn't afford too much. But I remember I loved to dance when I was in the service. I remember I was going to Sound School in Point Loma in the San Diego area and a couple of my buddies, we'd go out and work on a submarine all day and work on new equipment we had for sound gear. And we'd hitchhike up to Los Angeles and go to the Hollywood Palladium and we would dance there. Les Brown and Doris Day were popular at that time. But anyway, they had a Nightingale place out near Kaukauna and the big bands would come in on Sunday nights, and oh man, we'd go out there and dance 'til they kicked us out of there. The girls enjoyed the townies because we would take them to places like that and they would really enjoy that. So we maintained a very nice relationship with the ladies on the campus.

[00:20:35]

That's important.

Yes it is.

15. Well, coming back to Lawrence as an alum, how has the campus changed since you were a student and how has it remained the same?

I think it's the same in the people that are involved, cause I, we got to know all of them out at Alexander Gym, for example, all of the people there, and they loved these jocks as they called them. But there was a very good relationship, they were treated very nicely out there. The personnel, in the Union, we had a home on College Avenue that was the Union for many years when we were there, and then when the new Union came they had food in there and everything and we played sheepshead. We were great sheepshead players, always had a game of sheepshead going in the Union at one time or another and bridge, I learned how to play bridge there too, which was very good. I think it's just great the way they have built things along the river, just is a super campus. I have had many people when they used to visit up here, made sure they would see the Lawrence campus and go through it and are really taken by it. The only difficult thing of course is the Alexander Gym across the way. But they had a small gym, a girls' gym next to the Observatory where the president's home is right now. They had an observatory there with a small gym. I remember the girls always would play basketball or volleyball or whatever it was. But it's just amazing the growth over the years. We've had several presidents, I think Pusey, Walter Wriston or Henry Wriston before him. I met him on our 125th anniversary, I went to New York, we had a series of meetings around the country and we were all hooked up by phone. And I was very fortunate to sit with Dr. Wriston, he was an outstanding man. And then Nathan Pusey, outstanding, Doug Knight, outstanding guy. And they were all active admission primarily.

And they never had any really fundraising programs in those days and I was sort of right in between the transition between not much fundraising and fundraising. Since we got involved in the fundraising, the sky's the limit. I think this is true on a number of campuses. Those who have played their cards right and cultivated their alumni and asked

for the proper types of gifts and planned the structure along here. We had O.C. Boldt in town, we are so lucky to have a guy like George Banta from Banta Publishing, he and his son and daughter were very big over here. I can think of so many people, and these were companies that had been established for so many years, but then of course these companies left sometimes and the people who took over were not the same types. But anyway, new sources of income had been found. But the difference is just staggering, and I'm sure it's very attractive to the students, you know, now. I think it's wonderful I'm so pleased with the way the construction on the campus has gone, how they made it meld together with everything else. And I think most of the alumni are.

16. That's very good to hear. Well, let's see, we're almost out of time for the interview, is there anything else you want to share?

Oh, you know I'll probably think of a number of things as soon as I leave here, but if I do I can always write to you or give you a call, e-mail or something.

If there's nothing else, I'll go ahead and turn off the recorder.

[End: 00:24:25]