

**Oral History Interviews, Reunion Weekend 2008**

**Interview with Richard Rine, class of 1957**

**Interviewed by Julia Stringfellow**

**John G. Strange Commons, Main Hall**

**Interview #3 for June 21, 2008**

**[Start: 00:00:00]**

**1. Could you please state your name?**

Dick Rine.

**2. And what year did you graduate from Lawrence?**

Graduated from Lawrence in 1957.

**3. And what did you get your degree in?**

My degree was in History.

**4. And why did you choose to attend Lawrence?**

We had an English teacher at Neenah High School by the name of John Harris, and he influenced two of us, two classmates from Neenah to come to Lawrence and encouraged us to do so. He got some people from Lawrence to come over and see us, and we were very impressed.

**5. What were your first impressions of Lawrence upon starting as a Freshman here?**

I liked the idea of a small college because we had people on the first day we were here, and they became our friends for life. We still remember them as they were fifty years ago. The smallness, the family atmosphere, that was very enjoyable for me.

**6. I was wondering if you could talk some about the different places that you lived on campus while you were a student?**

The freshman year I lived with, my roommate was my friend from Neenah High School, and we lived in Brokaw Hall. The second and third years, my sophomore and junior years, I lived out at Alexander Gymnasium, across the river, which was, in that way I got my room for free and I was sort of a caretaker of the gym. Tough walks in the wintertime, back and forth to campus. I had a room out there for two years. And my senior year, I had a room in the basement of Main Hall. And all this time I was president of the Phi Delta chapter here at Lawrence, and I never lived in the Phi Delta house. I always thought that was kind of interesting.

**7. When you were living at Alexander, was your room on the first floor or the basement?**

I wish I could remember where it was. I know it was next to the washing machines, because we used to get a lot of lint coming through the walls and around the corners and through the doors and so on. So I think it was above the shower room and two levels above the underground pool, but right next to the washing machines, I remember that.

**8. And what were some of your duties as caretaker of the gym?**

Make sure the lights were out in the evening, and taking a walk around and making sure no one was trying to get in, that kind of thing. Just generally, looking over it and making sure everything was in the right order.

**9. When you were living in the basement of Main Hall, I was wondering this, if you were coming back and it was nighttime and you were going down to the basement, was it kind of creepy to be going in the dark to your room?**

It was creepy out at the gym because the lights normally weren't on. But in Main Hall they kept the classroom lights were on, I think some of the professors worked very late at night in those days in their offices. So there was always some light in Main Hall.

**10. What were some of the activities that you were involved in? You were a part of Phi Delta. What were some of the activities that you did with that?**

I was very active in athletics. In fact, I was a three sport captain. I was captain of the football, basketball, and tennis teams at Lawrence. And a charter member in the Lawrence Athletic Hall of Fame. That was primarily the bulk of our activities. That's why my wife and I enjoy coming back to Lawrence so much now for the symphony concerts and the choir concerts and everything else here because we missed a lot of those things when we going to school. Now we love it, and it's just fun to come back and do the college thing a different way.

**11. Were there activities that Phi Delta was involved in, like during Homecoming with the floats or the house decorations?**

Oh sure, in those days we did have Homecoming where the fraternities were decorated. And we always had a little pep band. And we always had some kind of Homecoming celebration at the Memorial Chapel, and I know we had a little band from the Phi Delta house that used to chug over to the chapel and play some songs that nobody recognized and had a great time doing that. It was fun, it was a small college atmosphere, I missed a lot of those because I was playing, so I didn't get to beat the drum going over to the chapel, I always wanted to beat the drum going over to the chapel.

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**12. Were there any traditions that you participated in, like I know that guarding the ROCK during Homecoming was important, like other traditions that were going strong at Lawrence that you were active in?**

We always, one of the traditions that my wife will never let me forget, was the fact that when you get pinned or engaged, the fraternity always serenaded the gal. The entire fraternity would go and we'd sing our Phi Delta songs in this case. The thing that, I don't even know if I should put this on tape, I didn't have a heck of a lot of money going to Lawrence, I didn't have a floral arrangement to give to my engaged girlfriend, and I just got a terribly bad time from all of my friends for that, but I couldn't afford it, couldn't afford a bouquet at the time. That was a custom that was very nice. Let's see what else, the Phi Kappa fraternity used to have a carnival party every year which was with the Dixieland band. Some of the highlights, I think the name of the group was the Salty Dogs, it was really one of the highlight nights for everybody to enjoy on campus.

And the Union was a hangout. In those days the kids played a lot of bridge, a lot of cards, and things like that. The Union really was the focal point, even though there was no alcohol or anything like that, but you'd go over and have a coke and a bag of potato chips, and see people you might not see for three or four days. It was fun.

**13. Was Riverview used for any famous speakers coming in, or dances, or activities like that?**

We had, my first year in college, Nathan Pusey was our president. He later went on to become president of Harvard. He came back during when Dr. Knight was here for his first speech. And I'll never forget that because now he was the president of Harvard, everything he talked about was of great fondness about Lawrence. And I remember sitting in the chapel listening to him and it was just marvelous. I'm sure we had many other great speakers but I can't, fifty years is too long ago for me to remember that.

**14. Who were some of the professors that really had a strong influence on you?**

There were two, and I'm so glad you asked that because these two professors had something in common. The kids loved them, they were so enthusiastic about the teaching process, and they had that whatever it is they were able to communicate so effectively to any student in the class. And those two professors were Dr. William Chaney, who was in the history department and he also taught Freshman Studies. Dr. Chaney became a very good friend of mine, is still a good friend of mine. And anybody that you talk to who has been a student of Dr. Chaney will say that by far he was the most enthusiastic and diligent and most wonderful professor that they've ever had the opportunity to work with.

And the other is George Walter who of course is a name here that will go on forever. He got so many of the kids interested in the educational process, and then later becoming teachers, some becoming great teachers at the college, and so on. But again he had that same personality that Dr. Chaney had, the enthusiasm that came from these two

professors was something that nobody will ever forget in their days at Lawrence. They were both that wonderful.

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**15. I was wondering if you participated in the Winter Weekends where students would go up and go skiing like in Michigan, or if you participated in curling or other winter type activities?**

I couldn't because I was playing three sports, and the basketball season was in the wintertime. A lot of my friends had great times on those skiing trips, and I heard a lot of stories about it. We also had a couple of people in school who were Golden globe boxers and there were bus trips and things like that. Unfortunately I missed a lot of that at Lawrence because of the three sports, three seasons. That's why it's so much fun to come back here now and hear the music and everything that goes on at Lawrence which we dearly love and missed while we were in school.

**16. When you were on the football team, was Ripon as big of a rival then as they are now?**

Ripon is always going to be the main rival for Lawrence, and history will dictate that because they played so many games against each other. And the coach that we had while I was in school really disliked Ripon, I almost used the word hated, but really disliked Ripon very much. All of us who played for him grew to dislike Ripon. And even today when Ripon brings their basketball or football teams here, those are games that I go to because I have an extreme interest in Lawrence beating the Ripon team. Ripon will always be the main Lawrence rival.

**17. And were there ever any times when Ripon came and tried to steal Lawrence's ROCK and take it with them?**

I think they did, and I'm not sure if they ever got away with that, I don't really remember that. There were some pranks, I just don't have the details in my mind, both schools, some Lawrence kids going down to Ripon and that type of thing.

**18. How aware were the students at Lawrence of what was going on in the country? It was the age of McCarthy and then he passed away right as your class was getting ready to graduate. How aware was the Lawrence community of what was going on outside of Lawrence?**

Surprisingly, not very aware of what was going on in the outside world in the mid-1950s. I think if you go a little bit further, 1959, 1960, 1961, Vietnam, and so on, but at Lawrence from 1953-1957, it was a college that all your strength and all your activity and all your fun and everything was kind of in that mode, just being a college student at a great college. And there wasn't a lot of things going on in our mind about what was happening outside of Lawrence, and that's an absolute fact.

**19. What was the relationship like between the administration and the faculty and the students here at Lawrence?**

Excellent relationship, some of the classes that many of us went to, there was six or eight people in the class, some of the classes were held at night at the professors' homes, and occasionally we even got served a little wine and potato chips. And we used to have three or four hour classes at night, these were specialized as you got into your major maybe your senior year or so on. Dr. Chaney had a number of history courses at his home. But mainly the biggest class I was in was maybe twenty people at the most. So there was a great relationship, professors knew you very well, and you knew them. Occasionally you'd hear from them after you left school, and you certainly would come back and say hi to them when you returned to campus. I think there was a tremendous relationship.

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**20. Coming back to Lawrence as an alumnus and coming back here throughout the years, how has Lawrence stayed the same and how has it changed?**

I think the kids are so much more worldly. I was telling you how introverted we were as far as Lawrence is concerned. The kids here have the opportunity to be in so many different areas of the Lawrence community, and the outside activities in both Appleton and the state of Wisconsin and Washington D.C. and so on. The different clubs that are available to them, the way classes are taught today are so different. The kids have just a great opportunity to grow up a hell of a lot faster than we did, they've matured and in most cases they've matured very well. We just think that the kids are, when they get out of Lawrence today, they're much better prepared to deal with what they have to deal with compared to when we were in school and graduated and probably didn't have a good idea of what we were going to do the next day. That's the biggest difference.

**21. Are there any other stories that you'd like to add?**

I can't think of too much, we love the Lawrence community so much and everybody we've met here has been wonderful. All of our friends come back for the reunions, and last year was our fiftieth and we had about eighty people back. So that says something right there. We've enjoyed it very much.

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