

**Oral History Interview  
Reunion Weekend, Interview #3  
Interview with Ted Katzoff, class of 1965  
Interviewed by Julia Stringfellow  
Location: Lawrence University Archives  
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[Start: 00:00:00]

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

My name is Ted Katzoff, class of 1965.

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

Drama.

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

Boy, that is a great question. So there I was, my senior year in high school, not knowing what I wanted to do, where I wanted to go. Back in those days it seems to me that young people were not so involved in the paramilitary campaigns that are put on in order to go to universities, to travel, to interview, to see. In other words, pretty intense, it wasn't like that at all. Basically I was clueless. I went to see what turned out to be a very wise counselor at my high school. And she asked me a couple of questions, "What do you think you want in terms of an overall thing?" And I said, "Well, I want to get out of town, I don't think I want to go to school in Los Angeles, I want to go someplace different, be someplace else. I think I'd like a small school rather than a big one." And somewhere along the line I'd heard the term "liberal arts" without understanding at all what it meant, but that sounded interesting. So I said, "Something like maybe a liberal arts college." And her eyes lit up and she said, "Well, I have just the thing for you." She wrote out a list of schools, most of them were in the Midwest, a few were on the West coast, and among the schools that were listed was Lawrence, Lawrence College. And so Lawrence was one of the places I was sent to get information, that I sent an application to, the whole thing. And in the end, when everything finally shook out, I was accepted right away at two places, number one the University of Chicago, and the other Lawrence College. So I would have ended up in the Midwest no matter what. So I went back and I looked at the catalogs again, and I was primarily a person interested in speaking and performing and writing and literature and history, I loved history. I was more like an artist and not really like a scientist, I did not do well in the sciences. So I was looking at the catalogs, and the University of Chicago said, "freshmen requirement Physics." Lawrence freshmen requirement science, pick one. And I looked and it was, "oh, geology – that sounds like something I could maybe do and be okay in," it was like earth history and all of that. That was one of the things that kind of pushed me over the edge, though I think I would have come here anyway because of the difference in the size and the location.

And so, they said yes and I said yes and then came the time, 1961, flew to Chicago with just a couple of suitcases and then got on board, this was 1961 remember, a DC 3 and flew from Chicago to Appleton. And we were coming in for a landing and I was looking out the window, had never seen this before, I didn't see an airport, I didn't see any runways, what I saw were miles of green grass with cows. We're landing in a cow pasture, we're going to kill a cow, you know. It didn't happen because we landed and there it was, one landing strip and a Quonset hut and that was the Outagamie County Airport. Get to the university, got a cab, had my suitcases and everything. I looked around and it was very quiet, there was nobody there. I was able to find the dormitory that I was assigned to; I kind of asked somebody who was on campus. And at that time it was the Pan-Hellenic House which is in that little green garden area in front of Colman Hall, okay, there was a house there. I walked in and there was nothing there, there were beds with mattresses, no sheets or anything, just here and there. I realized I was alone, and I just collapsed basically, emotionally, I fell down on one of the beds in one of the rooms and I just cried myself to sleep. I was by myself.

Well, a little bit later there was a knock on the door, and there was a gentleman by the name of McCloud who at the time was a senior and who was a person in charge of the house, a student counselor. And he made everything all right; he realized what was going on with me and he said, "no problem, don't worry, everybody is coming tomorrow, we'll get you all set up." He showed me things around the campus, where I needed to be, let me know where I needed to go, and he was right, the next morning everything was fine. And that was great. So I lived in this rather smallish, rather wonderful dormitory, so I never had the big dormitory experience, it was all the small dormitories. And that was my freshman year as far as living is concerned.

I pledged and activated Beta Theta Pi, because I was interested in fraternities, I knew nothing about fraternities, just like I knew nothing about liberal arts colleges. But it seemed like an interesting thing to do, it was part of the college experience, and that was one of the reasons why I was here, the college experience, kind of starry-eyed. And my second year I lived in the Beta house, third year for one half of the year I lived upstairs on the top floor in the home of Professor Cloak, Mr. Cloak, I lived in his house.

**[00:06:10]**

**That's the house over on Union Street.**

Yes, I believe, where Attic Theatre was and all that. And then the second half of my junior year and all of my senior year I lived in an apartment above Conkey's bookstore, I had a very nice relationship with Howie Feland, so he rented me the apartment and actually sold me a car to go back to Los Angeles at the end of my junior year. It was very, very nice, that was fun.

So essentially that's how I ended up at Lawrence, very serendipitous in many, many ways. And I know it isn't quite that way anymore as far as people making choices is concerned, but it was a very, very fortunate choice as far as I'm concerned, because what Lawrence did for me educationally particularly directing the way in which I think, the way I look at things more than anything else, how I feel about things is echoing today, 45 years later, maybe even more strongly because I'm old enough to understand it. Back then, I didn't really understand it, it took a while to

understand what the education, not just the learning of stuff, but the manner in which I was taught, now we're talking about teachers and professors and how they taught, how they related to you as a person, not just a student, not just a group of ears and brains to be taught something, but actually collegial situation, a partnership, doing things together. That's really the way it was. And I began to recognize that much later in life. One of the reasons I found myself wanting to get back more than anything else.

I had an interesting life here along with the academic situation. I'm a fencer, I'm a fencing master, that is my profession. I teach the modern sport of fencing, also the historical and stage combat as well. But I'd been fencing for about eight years when I came to Lawrence and in my second year, I went to work for the athletic department to help defray some of my tuition costs by teaching a class in fencing. I taught that in the foyer of Alexander Gymnasium, and those days it was wide open, now there are pedestals with memorabilia and things in them, back in those days it was wide open. And we actually had a pretty successful fencing program, I had a lot of interesting kids. I taught what I knew, and we actually put a team together one year, and we went and we fenced against the University of Wisconsin at Oshkosh where they had a fencing team and we beat them. I was rather pleased at that. But the athletic department thought that well this is nice, I'm doing the fencing which is one thing, but if I'm really going to earn, I should be doing something else too. So they gave me book on trampolines and said, "Next quarter you're going to teach trampoline." Okay, my primary job was to make sure while people were bouncing up and down on a trampoline, nobody fell off and got killed, that was my main job. So I was reading one chapter ahead of each class, so let's do this today and do that today, so that was a rather interesting experience. But I enjoyed doing that. And the fencing program actually continues, because with the merger, Lawrence and Milwaukee-Downer, one of their physical education teachers...

[00:09:56]

### **Mary Poulson.**

Mary Heinecke Poulson, I met her and I basically handed the fencing program to her. And she took it to the next level, she turned it into a varsity program and a very good program for many, many years. One of the things I'm really happy about as far as Lawrence is concerned, that at least up to this point and time when she stepped down, there was another person they hired to continue the program. So the fencing program here is very dear to me.

I was a drama major, wasn't sure what I really wanted to be, I had a really good history teacher in my senior year in high school and that was sort of, "gee, history would be great, that would be wonderful." And some of the history teachers here are interesting people, Professor Bessac particularly, he taught Chinese history. He has a whole story too about being a few days ahead of some army units of the then new Communist government by Mao who were basically hunting down any foreign journalists or people like that to arrest them and he made an escape apparently, and it was in *National Geographic*, 1950, I think it was. He made an escape across China and over to Tibet, to India, it took them about six months, something like that, getting out of China. An interesting man.

So that was all very interesting, and then the theatre department was doing a play, and I thought I'd try out for the play. It was "The Visit." And so I tried out, and of course I was going to take a drama class, I knew that because I'd been involved in theatre since I was a little kid. I just hadn't thought of it necessarily as something that I wanted to pursue professionally or whatever exactly, or as a teacher, whatever. But I got a role in "The Visit" and began to work with Mr. Cloak and everything changed. Everything became very, very brightly focused on that remarkable teacher and extraordinary man, very much an influence in my life.

And so I had to declare my major, and we had to do that with the head of the department, so the end of my sophomore year I had an appointment with Mr. Cloak. But the night before – I remember I was living in the Beta house – I decided to find out what it was like to get drunk. What was the actual feeling, what really happens, especially since there were some heavy hitters in the house. And I was Mr. Straight Arrow, you know, and I didn't do things like that. So we all went and we did the Avenue and we ended up at some bar or other and I decided, what I did was I drank five beers. I was pretty much gone by the second one. And so these guys, laughing and chuckling all the way, helped me back, half carrying me, half pushing me along, back to the house. And they put me to bed, and they were all still laughing, and I was giggling.

And then I woke up the next morning, and the reason they were laughing was, they knew what I was going to feel like the next morning. And sure enough I did, I had to go in that morning to see Mr. Cloak and declare my major. So there I was, in his office, sort of holding onto the chair I was sitting in, trying to look human. And he picked up on it right away, finally he said, "okay, what's the story, there is something going on here." So I told him the story and he laughed and he thought that was very funny. I tried to make an excuse about, "well, I'm an actor, you know, and I've got to find out what these things really feel like." And he laughed at that one too. He knew it would wear off, so I became a drama major. And that was a great experience.

**4. Now when you arrived at Lawrence, the Music-Drama Center had just been built, so where were theatrical productions held and rehearsals and that sort of thing?**

Well, basically there were three areas where theatre took place. Stansbury Theatre and backstage was where we had a painting area, there's a little classroom which you have to go up a circular ladder to get to, it was on the same level as the light bridge was with all the controls. I studied with Joe Hopfensperger up there, technical theatre. The stage itself was often used as a classroom with, we were sitting out in the audience and observing each other. Then there was the black box, the experimental theatre, and that's what it was then, it was a black box. Nothing was permanent, you could move the seats around in any configuration you wanted. Then there was the green room, essentially the basement down below. And that was a classroom, that's where I had my first acting classes with Mr. Cloak, downstairs in the basement. But it was fully functional at that time.

**[00:15:27]**

When I started coming back to Lawrence as an alum, of course I always visited the theatre and took a look in and it looked to me, there was a really ugly chandelier, they've done a very nice job with the new seats and the painting and the acoustical work that's been done. But where the

lights are hanging from is still the same, it looks to me like it's the same light bulbs that were burnt out 45 years ago. But it's a wonderful theatre of its type, very classic type of small arch theatre, 500-seat auditorium, a good place to be, very embracing as it were. So I spent a lot of my life there, lots and lots of time, and really loved it.

#### **5. Who all were part of the theatre department?**

Three primarily, there were more, but the three I interacted with were Mr. Cloak, Joe Hopfensperger, and David Mayer III. They kind of divided things up where Mr. Cloak did a lot of the teaching in terms of acting, Joe did a lot of the technical theatre work, building sets, designing, hanging lights, all of that, David Mayer did a lot of the work involving theatre history and criticism, though all of them had to do theatre history and they all had something to say about acting. And each was very, very different in their own particular way. Mr. Cloak was something on the order of the spiritual core of what theatre was, and I guess to a certain extent still is, at Lawrence. Joe Hopfensperger was like the blood and bones, you're hanging lights, you're building scenery, you're mixing paint – by the way, with Joe you mixed paint with your bare hands. You put paint together you stuck your hands in the bucket, and you just worked it with your bare hands. It was great, it was really wonderful, he was the blood and the bones of it. David Mayer, a little bit on the outside in a way, very intellectual, I think he gave us a sense, and I think it's very important to have that sense, of artistic superiority that ignorant college students should have a certain touch of, you know. And he was very good at that, and I think that sort of rounded us out in many ways.

So all in all, it was a very complete education, and I'm leaving some people out, but those are the three that were most important as far as my development as a theatre person is concerned. I'd been in theatre since the age of four, and had done professional work you know, on stage and television and motion pictures before coming here to Lawrence. But in terms of really learning what it was all about, understanding the inner workings of it and what makes acting acting and directing directing for that matter, really needed something different than just life experience. Of course when I went to graduate school I continued with that and further along with that aspect of it, but the foundation was really laid here. But again in terms of communication, that holistic approach and that humanistic approach which I think really makes Lawrence what it is, really meant a great deal and that's the thing that has echoed. I've done theatre, I've taught theatre, I'm a fencing master, how odd, I've been stage combat kind of bringing the two arts together, I've been in retail, worked for a company, I was a middle management person, really weird stuff that I didn't have any idea I was ever going to do. But I was able to go with it. Everything that I did, I learned something from. Again I think the mind being opened was a part of what the education is here. And I got to do a lot of things. I think part of what people don't realize, maybe because the school is small, how much you can do here. I was involved in the radio station at that time, WLFM.

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#### **6. Now where was that housed?**

That was housed in the basement, still is, of the Music-Drama Center. But then we're talking about a big FM transmitter, so we're talking about radio as opposed to streaming and things, that's a whole different ball of wax now. So I did that and I became chief announcer my second year in, so I was spinning platters literally because everything was vinyl. And then we were also into, we had a group that got together, all of us were friends, most of us were in the theatre department, and we had a live show on the radio, called "The Colon Solid Hour." Similar to "Laugh in," similar to "Monty Python" before those people. I think we might have been influenced by the "Goon Show," which was Peter Sellers and Spike Milligan, it was on the radio on the BBC during that period of time. And we called it the "Colon Solid Hour" because it went for ninety minutes, I mean, we were really silly. And very creative, again part of that process was extraordinary, just being involved and coming up with the things we came up with, including phony advertisements, funny, humorous advertisements for nonexistent products. And actually we had no idea, but you're not allowed to do that, even if it's phony. Since we were a non-profit station, no advertising of any kind and the FCC wrote the school a letter. So we were caught. Not meaning to be, but that was kind of fun too.

I was a member of the Intercollegiate Players, a national fraternity of theatre, several of us, again that group that primarily hung out in the theatre department, came together and several of those folks, John Farge in particular, were excellent musicians. And we got involved in jug band music because it was very popular in the mid-1960s. So we formed a jug band and we rehearsed and practiced and we played locally. And in the summer of 1964 we went down to Chicago and tried to make it which of course was utterly silly, just like a summer vacation in Chicago. We had enough money to rent an apartment on North Wells Street near the Gold Coast, but not enough money to pay to have the water heater turned on or the gas turned on. So we had cold baths and we cooked on a Coleman stove. We were there for like a month. And we played, we played free at a number of the different places and actually as the summer ended we were offered a job, but we had to go back to school. We weren't real artists in that sense because finishing up school was more important. It was a lot of fun, we did a couple of performances at seventh inning stretches at local ballgames, the Fox Cities Foxes was a triple A ball team, and so we went out there and we played our music during the seventh inning stretch. We also did an interview with music on the local radio station, I cannot remember what it was called, the letters, at this time. But I still have a tape of that. So just things like that, it was teaching fencing, doing fencing, it was performing on stage, it was doing jug band music, doing stuff on the radio. I was a fraternity member as well, a fraternity brother. It was a very enriching and rich experience.

One of the things again about coming back is just to reconnect with a lot of people, especially my own class, you know, and it took a long time for me to actually make that circle. I tended to say, "okay, something is past and is now in the past," and I kept looking forth forward. And so the further I got away from Lawrence in terms of years the further away I got. And somewhere along the line, someone said, "You've got to come back, you really have to come back." So I came back for my thirtieth reunion, first one, and it was so wonderful that I regretted all the reunions I had not come back to and I decided I would come back for every one and would try to get back to Lawrence and occasionally do other things. And that's what I'm trying to do also. One of the things that I love to do is teach. So I've come back on a couple of occasions and done master classes and stage for the theatre department and worked with drama majors. I've done one seminar, training seminar for the fencing team, and I'm hoping to be doing things like that as

long as I can for quite some time to come. And I really love coming back here. The one thing that is different is that I'm very smart about when I'm going to be coming back and that is primarily in the spring and in the fall, and I try to avoid January and February if I possibly can. I did that once actually, I came back to do something, one of the things I did for the drama department the only time they had was in February. I landed in a blizzard, I mean it was a blizzard, snow was coming down, the wind was blowing at thirty or forty miles an hour. It was incredible, and I didn't have the right clothes, I was completely insane, did my thing and got the hell out. And so I probably wouldn't want to come back here, even though I was here for four years and lived through all that weather, you know, and I remember walking to school and the thermometer on the side of the bank, it was near campus at the time, said it was -30 degrees. So one of the things I did learn was that it's really not so much about the weather, it's about the clothes. So cold weather like we have here in Wisconsin actually gives you an opportunity to buy and use really interesting clothing. And then it's wonderful, it doesn't matter how cold it is.

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**7. I was going to ask, how did you come about living in the attic of Ted Cloak's house?**

That's an interesting story. Actually deals with a mistake I made, a personal error, and that was being young and everything, being subject to being led around by hormones as many young men primarily are. I actually, at the end of my sophomore year during the summertime, I married my high school sweetheart. So I was a married person when I came back. We needed a place to live as a couple. So Mr. Cloak offered his house for a while and then after that we moved in upstairs up above Conkey's. Perfectly lovely, interesting young lady, both of us got married for the wrong reasons and that happens.

And so eventually when I had my first job out of graduate school teaching theatre at a small college in upstate New York, we had a daughter who is now forty years old and is the mother of a two-year-old, so I'm a grandfather. It's the most interesting feeling indeed, very sharp little girl, very feisty like her mother and her grandmother actually. But that relationship ended a long time ago with my daughter's mom. I'm currently married and have a nineteen-year-old son who just graduated high school on the 18<sup>th</sup> of June, 2009. That was quite an experience for me also, to watch him go through that process, the passage of time told by your children.

**8. I was going to ask, you were a student here when the merger with Milwaukee-Downer took place.**

A lot of things happened, a very crucial set of years. 1961-1965, that's when Douglas Knight left, then Curtis Tarr came in, that was the merger, the assassination of Kennedy, the assassination of Martin Luther King, marches for civil rights, Vietnam, really the 1960s were an incredibly intense time. And we felt that, it was part of our life too, not really insulated from that at all, didn't want to be. People had different opinions when people marched. People came to campus to speak. One of the things that really attracted me to the Beta house was that one of the brothers was obvious by how different he was, the African American young man.

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**The Betas were the first to pledge an African American student.**

Exactly, as a matter of fact, not only pledge, but activate. I think it was this house here, Gamma Phi, that had to actually stand up to and face down the national fraternity that still believed in the old ways. And they won, because they were ready to go local, stand up for their principles. Now I didn't know all of that, but there was something about the atmosphere in that house that I really liked.

That's a really interesting experience too, because people who rush fraternities and sororities and then pledge and do all that, really have no idea what that process involves and entails until they are activated and until they are the ones receiving people who are rushing and pledging. Imagine my absolute consternation, shock as it were, when I sat in on my first cut session, after I was now a brother and I was a sophomore and I was living in the house, and here come all the new freshmen and all that stuff. We had the booklet, the face books, the real ones that you could actually open up and look at. And we were marking off who was coming through and who they were and we would have conversations and then we would sit down and we started talking about these people. And that really surprised the heck out of me. That was really rather shocking, and oh my God, they were talking about me in the same fashion. That was quite an eye opener. And we're talking about good people, we're not talking about nasty folks. Yet it's amazing how you make some decisions in life on very little information.

Suffice to say, for the most part impressions were pretty accurate, you know, but still, it was quite an interesting experience. I learned something about human life and about people at that point too. So in a sense it wasn't a totally negative experience at all, but it was an interesting learning one. Something about me impressed enough of these guys that they thought it was okay that I would become one of their members. So in a sense I got a little puffed up, and thought, oh, wow okay. But in another sense it only took one person to say the guy is thumbs down.

**9. How were the Milwaukee-Downer students and faculty received at Lawrence when they started in that first year of 1964-1965?**

That's a really interesting question. Given my life, I was not that much aware, there were just more students. The fact that all of them were women didn't hinge that much on my particular consciousness, I was involved with my final year, junior year, senior year, graduating, all of that. And so for me, the merger was seamless. I know it was not for them. But much of those feelings I didn't really understand until I had a chance over many years later to talk to Milwaukee-Downer alumnae who were part of that group, the last graduates, and how they felt about that. You know it was very painful for them. At the same time, ultimately, everything has merged very, very nicely, and those that are still with us are coming back for their 45<sup>th</sup> reunion and what not. I appreciate Lawrence as the university made up of Lawrence College and Milwaukee-Downer College and what both institutions brought to each other. To a certain extent, the students, who they were as people, and also for faculty. The one faculty member I got to know very closely was Mary Poulson. And we're very, very good friends, and we're still very, very good friends. So that was an interesting time too, all of that stuff that was going on.

**10. Now with the assassination of JFK, of course that was a really sad time for everyone. Lawrence had a memorial service, right?**

What I remember most, I remember two things most, as most people do, where I was when the word came down. And then watching the funeral. There was a group of us in Stansbury Theatre, I don't quite remember what we were doing, whether it was a jug band rehearsal or just something else where we were all there, bang the doors open up, the top of the auditorium, a kid came running down, "The president's been shot! The president's been shot!" "No, there must be some weird thing with the news." Then of course we found out it was true. And then of course he died. And we, many of the drama majors gathered together in Mr. Cloak's home, and we watched the funeral. The strongest recollection I have of that was I was looking at Mr. Cloak and he was just crying so hard. There wasn't a sound, but overflowing with tears, this expression of great loss on his face. You began to feel what this really meant, especially with someone you respect so much. So yes, the memorials were there, and that's really what I recall mostly, the memorial in my life was in Mr. Cloak's living room, watching the funeral.

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**11. The 1960s also brought about racial diversity, including here at Lawrence. I was wondering, how was that? Because the records that I've looked at prior to 1969 don't really talk about it, but I know it must have been going on.**

Yes, because there was a number of African-American students on campus when I came and who came after I came. I was brought up in a very liberal family and I didn't, so much so that the disparity wasn't really that noticeable to me, personally. Black brother in the house, my friends who also were African-American, Sid Mallory in particular, we spent a lot of time in the basement of the Union building playing pool. As a matter of fact we spent so much time down there that we actually got pretty good, in the theatre department, the whole thing. The one time that I realized things were different, it must have been with Sid or one of the other male African-American students, it may have been in a bar, I think it was a bar. And as far as I could tell, as far as the town was concerned, going into the bars, it wasn't a problem. You didn't see white only, not here in Appleton.

But we were sitting having a beer and a local person came up, a fellow, and he looked at my friend and he said, "Well how's the team this year?" And we figured out since my friend was not an athlete at all, that what he was talking about was the Fox Cities Foxes, the triple A baseball team, the only black faces that townspeople generally saw were baseball players, because baseball was integrated. So generally if they didn't know who you were and they didn't get around the college much, if you were a male black person, you were probably a baseball player, and so, "how was the team?" That was an eye opener, because it wasn't out and out angry, white superiority, prejudice and bigotry, it was just "how's the team?" kind of like we don't know who you are really. The only contact we have with you is either through the university or the baseball team.

So I did not personally see any of negativity, bigotry, what not, there may have been. As a matter of fact, Sid is coming back and he may have more to say about that, because we were asking about what was the life, particularly of African Americans. There were Asians as well, but the African-American community really stood out in a way. It didn't stand out that much to me, but to some folks I could obviously see there was a difference. But what it meant and how it manifested itself I wasn't really personally aware. I guess that says something nice about me, but also I was a bit ignorant, ignorance is bliss. I'm from Washington D.C. originally, and I started grammar school there. I'd walk home from my school and one of the routes I would take would take me by another school. I'd look in and there were all black kids. It didn't mean anything to me. Years later I realized, oh, I went to school in a segregated school district. My high school was all white, and then there was a black school over there. And I didn't realize that.

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That's a bit of a wake up too on how the world was, and it wasn't as wonderful as I thought it was, and how much it has changed. Much of it we hope for the better. But Lawrence was always open. I mean one of the first groups you might say had been prejudiced against were women. Lawrence was a coeducational institution from the get go. And that says something about the people who started this school, and how they were thinking. That's one of those things that keeps echoing down through all of these decades. So it was good, it taught me a lot.

**12. What were some of the traditions on campus during the early 1960s, like were people still moving the ROCK and doing Homecoming?**

Yes, we did Homecoming, we did floats, the fraternities put up floats based on primarily automobiles that were decorated and then built out. Let me see, the ROCK was still being moved, and the spring of my freshman year was the spring of the great water balloon fight. It was really warm in May, prior to graduation and all of that, we were all still there. And the water balloon fight started, and it spread throughout the whole campus, and actually went on for three days. The sun would go down, things would stop, but as soon as the sun came up, water balloons everywhere. People had those ultra powerful slingshots, made out of steel tubing, and surgical tubing to fling a water balloon a hundred and fifty yards, it was an incredible thing. We tried to recreate it the following year, but primarily in the fraternity quadrangle, started with water balloons and ended with M80s. And one of our guys had one of those slingshots and the house directly across the quad from us, they were throwing water balloons at us, we were launching water balloons at them, he started launching M80s, he would arch them up so they would explode outside the sleeping porch, and he got one in the living room. They opened the door, he winged one in, and they closed the door. When we saw and heard Bang!, we saw their living room light up through the windows, and noise. It was hilarious of course.

But then the word came down that Dean Venderbush was on his way, Dean of Students. I remember, again one of those memories, I was upstairs second floor and I run downstairs saying, "Venderbush is on his way!" just as he walked in the door. I made a u-turn and went back and he said, "un-uh." But he was relatively gentle with us, he showed sternness and disapproval of what we did, and we were all very contrite. And we actually didn't do that again, but just that moment when he walked in the door, we were caught red-handed. Fraternity life was interesting, it gives

you an opportunity to do some silly things, and we did silly things. None of which was actually harmful, I appreciated that.

Our hell week which ended in hell night, which then ended in you being activated as a brother. Hell week primarily all the pledges spent, instead of going to your dormitory, you were in the house, I was a freshman so I was in the house. University rules were you had to be fed and you had to get eight hours sleep and you had to have time to do your homework. Within that there were certain variations, as to you got eight hours, but it didn't necessarily all come at once, that kind of thing. And you had to get your homework done and all of that, and you did eat, though the quality of the food was not great particularly, just an amazing amount of corn flakes. You would be woken up, you would get like four hours of sleep, you'd be woken up, and then for an hour we went through this routine, down in the basement where the brothers were yelling and throwing wads of wet toilet paper at us and asking us questions and making us do push-ups and silly things like that. And then we had to mop up the floor, there was about an inch of water on the floor. And then we got our other four hours. Stuff like that. Then the final night and all of that, and then we pledged. So that was one thing relatively mild. As far as we were concerned, the Betas, no one was physically or emotionally abused at all, though those words were not in the language at the time. It just didn't happen.

**[00:46:19]**

And we had fun doing it the following year, those of us who had gone through it so we got some of it back, but it was the same thing, relatively mild and friendly and full of laughter on both sides. I remember that one of the things that we did, we had an old upright piano in the basement and we had a really nice baby grand piano upstairs. We decided we had to get rid of the old piano. So about ten or twelve of us picked the thing up, took it up out of the basement, walked it down John Street Bridge, and tossed it over into the Fox River. And it went floating away, spreading keys and hammers as it went. And actually we heard later that apparently part of that piano got stuck in one of the locks and required some work by people to remove it. They were rather surprised to see what it was and it was a piano, somehow stuck in the lock. I remember that obviously very fondly. It was nice being a part of that. The fraternity parties had a little too much alcohol. But it was okay. In the end, no one was hurt or damaged or did serious damage to property or people. It was a lot of fun. And part of that enrichment, part of what I say is living a full college life, so I really did.

**13. Carnegie Library was the library here at the time before the Mudd. Where there popular study areas for students or did students, nowadays students just descend on the library and use its resources, and I was wondering if it was like that then?**

I was always in the stacks, and in the stacks we had carrels, little desks. So I did an awful lot of studying there. Again, it was probably the best place to study. The fraternity house was a terrible place to try to study. And then I was married and all that sort of stuff and living off-campus. I wanted a place away from all of that, and primarily the library was where I ended up, mostly in the library and in the carrels. And my secondary place for studying was the Grill in the Union. It was a good place for teaching too, as a matter of fact. You'd sit and have hamburger or a sandwich or a cup of coffee with a professor and just chat. And that of course is still being done,

it's part of that Socratic style of education, that individualized learning. A lot of it took place outside the classroom, you know, in a very informal way. Teachers invite students to their home for example, and sit and talk, or at the Grill. You couldn't hear yourself think downstairs in the Viking Room because the jukebox was going and people were on their feet and there was a lot of energy down there. But upstairs you could actually read and talk over a cup of really terrible Midwestern coffee. Which has gotten better by the way, much, much better.

Food choices were interesting, they were very limited. The upscale place in the area was a restaurant called Scall's which was like a dining house. It was a steakhouse, a very nice place where I actually bought my first real bottle of wine, knew nothing about it at all, went out to dinner with my wife and we bought a bottle of wine, didn't know a thing about it. But then downtown, two places I went to a lot, the names are enough to let you know what kinds of places they were, Murphy's Hamburger House, Bill's Coney Island Lunch, one of my favorite places. But both of those places, Murphy's Restaurant, Murph who was a little Irish man, he looked rather gnome-like, and he always had a scowl on his face, and Mrs. Murph in the background, very quiet. That was very fun, eating hamburgers at Murphy's, I tell you.

**[00:50:53]**

And then Bill's Coney Island Lunch, you go up College Avenue, I don't remember what street it was on, it was one of the others off the main drag. Murphy's was on College Avenue. And other places as well, we would eat in Colman Hall Commons, of course when I was living in the fraternity house, ate there, a lot of meals in Colman. I went there with one of my very good and crazy theatre friends, who is no longer with us, his name is Tony Dodge. One of the strangest people I ever met, a crazy guy. But we would usually pick a table, the table sat six people, and we'd usually pick a table that had four girls at it and sat down with our food. Then we would proceed to do performance art based on the terrible conditions in the third world where you had so many children and people starving to death. While we were talking about the starving and hungry children of the world, we were stuffing food in our mouths. And shaking our heads, and tisking, and stuffing food in our mouths, and basically we were watching to see the reaction. And of course the reaction, you see a rattlesnake, you know how you back slowly away from it, that's kind of what the reaction was, they would do that. And of course we would laugh, we thought it was hilarious. College kids, what can I say, so many of us, it was great.

And then before we all knew how bad smoking was, there was a really wonderful smoke shop on College Avenue and we'd get all our supplies there. Cigarettes from around the world, and our pipe and our cigars from Italy and who knows where. We got cigars once and a couple of us went over to Ormsby and stood about in the downstairs lounge of Ormsby, smoking cigars, until we were asked not politely to leave, because the girls on the third floor I guess were saying they couldn't study because the aroma was so strong. I'm a little ashamed of that, but there it was.

You talk about an overall life in college, and it's made up of many, many things. It sounds like, did you learn anything? Yes, I really did. Did you learn to be a humanistic thinker? Yes. Did you learn to care about people? Yes. Did you learn to look at people as individual and unique human beings? Yes. Did you learn to communicate with them in a way that made sense and let them know that you respected who they were? Yes. And other things for me as an actor and director

and teacher of that, so much of what I was able to do to give back to students in theatre, was what I learned here. Certainly the manner of teaching, I got more technical work in graduate school, more focused that way. But as a number of Lawrence alumni whom I have spoken to have said in varying ways, that “what I learned at Lawrence and the way I learned at Lawrence made the most difference in my ultimate life and career and professional life. It made the most difference.” And I can see that, because I feel the same way.

[00:54:57]

**14. I just have one last question. I was going to ask about Freshman Studies, do you remember who your professor was, what work you really enjoyed studying or not studying, maybe how it may have influenced you?**

Well, Freshman Studies is like what liberal arts is in a nutshell. People think that's great and people think that's not so great. I actually really enjoyed it. First of all, we had that reading list over the summer that had some strong, Plato of course, Heart of Darkness, those are the two I remember most. I'm trying to remember, the thing that impressed me most was that the teachers who were teaching those things were not teachers in that particular subject. We did Plato with the head of the art department, a gentleman who was an architect essentially.

**15. Was it Charles Brooks?**

Charley Brooks, correct. I remember him very clearly, he would always come in with his jacket thrown over his shoulders like a cape. And so we all sat and we talked about Plato with him. It was a very interesting give and take. And then we did a study of American history or history in general, forgive me, it's like the names are always on the tip of my tongue. The head of the History department, Professor Maurice Cunningham, he had that marvelous room in the Union, the largest room there with the bust wall of philosophers and what not, they were all over the place.

**16. Was this room next to Riverview?**

No, in Main Hall, the Latin library. Actually he was professor of Latin. Now it all comes back. So we're doing like history with him, we're all sitting at this table about twelve of us and him, and he asked a question, "At what time was the major economic basis for the state of Wisconsin?" "Come on, people who live here don't know this?" So the answer that he gave to us just blew my mind, because it was a doggerel verse that my father used to sing to me for fun. "My name is Yan Johnson, I come from Wisconsin, I work in the lumberyards there. When I walk down the street, people I meet, say, Hey, what's your name?, and I say my name is Yan Johnson." Lumber, lumber mills, lumberyards, lumber. But coming out of him, it was really odd, because he was so tall, nose very aristocratic looking, and doing that. So Cunningham and Brooks, you know, they are strongly on my memory.

Some other stuff, it was there, but it's kind of fuzzy. But the way in which you approached getting an education and tying all this stuff together really set the tone for correlation, bringing together many different ideas. I think one of the things that was important from the course I took

from Professor Bessac that it was Chinese history. And this has changed, it's changed a lot, in that so much of the study in the United States was Western Europe, it was western history. And that's it, you know. Oh yes, and the influence that Europe primarily had on everybody else, like the indigenous people of South America, people throughout Asia and Africa. But it was all a kind of offshoot of western civilization. And even then, we didn't study particularly about those civilizations, that's changed a lot. So that was one thing.

The idea of correlating, of taking many different things and bringing them together to see a kind of how it all fits, yes, it was based primarily on western civilization. But still, you had to pull many different things in, and that was a very important aspect of the style and how you got your education. What makes liberal arts graduates pretty flexible of how they think and how they foresee things, able to actually change their mind about what they do, and follow different paths. Boy, that's something that's really important, to be able to do that. To walk away from something, and start something new. Or to be faced with something you haven't expected at all and find something of value in it and in a sense make it your own if that's what happens.

**[00:59:53]**

**17. Is there anything else you can think of that we haven't covered?**

There will probably be many things as soon as we turn the tape machine off. That's a digital recorder? You see that's how a 1965 graduate is. I will probably remember all kinds of things when we turn the recorder off, but it doesn't matter because hopefully I got most of the salient points about me, how I was influenced by this place, and what Lawrence was and still is, only it's expanding its horizons so much more now. And the idea is liberal arts education is a thing unto itself. There are many institutions that have this style, not enough. But Lawrence is not the only one, I think we're on the cutting edge. But I recommend this style of education to kids especially, where undergraduates are important people. That's a very important thing. You are taught by professors, you are taught by heads of department, there's no such thing as a T.A. You really get the skinny from the right people. That meant so much, because I could feel that we were cared for. We were important to them. Maybe that's one of the greatest things.

**I will go ahead and turn off the recorder then.**

**[End: 01:01:10]**