

# Interview with Rachel Schroeder

# EC-A-L-2013-089

Interview #1: September 25, 2013

Interviewer: Philip Pogue

Pogue: This is Phil Pogue. We're in Champaign, Illinois, where I'll be talking to Rachel Schroeder, who has been involved with Parkland College. We will be talking about how the college began and its history. We are doing this as part of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library project on the history of Illinois community colleges and their development. It's September 25, 2013.

Rachel, we want to thank you very much for being a participant and helping us to know District 505 better. To begin with, could you give us some background about yourself and your work experience?

Schroeder: I grew up on a farm northwest of Tolono, Illinois, and I graduated from Unity High School. Following graduation I enrolled at Illinois Commercial College. I graduated from Illinois Commercial College in March of 1965.

In January of 1965, I decided, since my classes were in the morning, that I would try to find a part-time job. So I worked part-time, from 1:00 to 5:00, at Service Buick, mainly filing. It was located in Champaign. Then in February one of my colleagues at Illinois Commercial College said that there was an opening at American National Bank, and he wondered if I would be interested in working to 3:00 pm. Then I became employed by American National, but I was still working at Service Buick, 3:15 to 5:00 pm.

In March of 1965, I resigned from Service Buick, and I began full-time employment at American National Bank. I worked there until October of 1966. Then I was approached about a job working for the board of trustees of what was then known as Junior College District 505. I began work on a part-time basis October 24 of 1966.

Dr. [William M.] Staerkel had been hired by the board in October of 1966, and he and I corresponded by telephone. Then he came to work as the



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full-time, founding president of Parkland College in January of 1967. I, fortunately, was able to work for him. I worked at the college until September 1, 2000.

Pogue: Does Illinois Commercial College exist today?

Schroeder: No, unfortunately it doesn't, because Parkland College really became a competitor, offering many of the classes that Illinois Commercial College offered. Illinois Commercial was a privately owned and run school.

Pogue: Why did you have an interest in this new junior college?

Schroeder: Actually I didn't know too much about it, but I worked for Henry Green at American National Bank, initially. Henry was the president [of the bank], and Henry had been the head of the steering committee [for the Junior College District 505], which was composed of quite a group of individuals, lay people and educators. It was the steering committee that brought the question to the voters of whether or not to establish a junior college.

So, Henry stopped by American National Bank one Saturday morning, and he said, "I hear that you are leaving." I said, "Yes, Henry, I am. I don't feel like I'm using the skills that I have, that I learned at Illinois Commercial College, and I would like something more challenging." So, Henry told me of the secretarial opening, and I believe it was the following week that I submitted an application for the position to work part-time for Junior College District 505.

I submitted the application to William Froom, who was the chairman of the board at the time, and then received an interview with Mr. Froom and was hired by Mr. Froom. So, I worked part-time from October of 1966 to January of 1967.

Pogue: When you recall that interview, what duties were they discussing with you?

Schroeder: Well, the duties mainly would be answering the telephone. They felt that people would be calling about jobs; teachers would be calling, asking for applications, and prospective students would be calling, wondering when the college was going to start, where it was going to be located. Of course [there would be] questions about tuition and fees. At that particular time none of that had been established.

At first, I thought maybe I had made the wrong decision. I began working mornings, 8:00 to 12:00. I would answer the phone, go to the post office just down the street and get the mail. That was about the extent of it. I did begin attending board meetings. I had never taken minutes at a board meeting before, so that was a new experience, especially taking minutes at a meeting where you did not know all of the trustees. I knew John Mathews and

Charlie Zipprodt and, of course, had met Mr. Froom, but the other members of the board I did not know.

Pogue: Were you involved with or aware of the referendum that allowed Parkland to be created? Was it a big issue at the time in the Champaign area?

Schroeder: No, unfortunately I was very young, and I do not recall much about that. But, of course, I learned when I began at the college, that March 12, 1966 was when the voters in the district overwhelmingly approved the establishment of the college.

Pogue: Where was your office at the time you first were employed?

Schroeder: The office was located at 117 West Elm Street in Urbana. It was called the Empire Building, and we had three rooms on the second floor. There were a couple of desks, a typewriter, a table with chairs around it for the board to meet, and numerous boxes of materials from the steering committee.

Pogue: How many employees were there at that time?

Schroeder: I was probably the second employee, because there was one lady by the name of Cathy Strickland who had worked some for the board. I never had an opportunity to meet Cathy; I worked by myself. Dr. Staerkel comes, and we two began working together in January. I believe that Dr. Donald Smith was hired as dean of instruction in February. Dr. Donald Swank, dean of students, in March, and Oscar Lanphar as the first business manager in April. Each administrator had a secretary, and we eventually had a receptionist.

Pogue: All of this was still at that location that you mentioned before?

Schroeder: Yes, it became rather crowded, and we were able to rent one more room, so we basically had four rooms on the second floor of this building. It was an interesting building because on the first floor were a physician, a beauty shop, and an insurance agency. We basically had most of the second floor.

Pogue: Where did Dr. Staerkel come from?

Schroeder: Dr. Staerkel had been an educational consultant for six years with Booz, Allen and Hamilton of Chicago, and he had done considerable travel throughout the country.<sup>1</sup>

Pogue: How long were you at this address?

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<sup>1</sup> Booz Allen Hamilton Holding Corporation is the parent of Booz Allen Hamilton Inc., a U.S. management and information technology consulting firm, headquartered in McLean, Virginia, in Greater Washington, D.C., with 80 other offices around the globe. ([www.boozallen.com](http://www.boozallen.com))

- Schroeder: We were at 117 West Elm until the summer of 1967. I believe we moved in either June or July to downtown Champaign.
- Pogue: So you moved from one spot in downtown to another?
- Schroeder: One spot in Urbana, then over across town to downtown Champaign.
- Pogue: And what kind of facility was that?
- Schroeder: There were a number of facilities. Basically, about any facility that the board could rent, they would. The administrative offices, the president's office, was located at 2 Main Street on the second floor of a former Diana Dress Shop, and the library was on the first floor. The student center was a block west on Church Street; it was in an old grocery store. The board rented space in churches; it rented from the water company; the old Arthur Murray Dance Studio; and out on West Springfield, where the former Grab It Here used to be.<sup>2, 3</sup> So basically, it was spread out a little bit, but whatever space the board could find, they would quickly rent it because we needed it for the students.
- Pogue: You were hired in October of 1966. When did classes start for the new college?
- Schroeder: Classes started... This is ironic because, as we're doing this interview today, on September 25, it occurs to me that is the exact date that classes started in 1967.
- Pogue: So, the goal was to try to get a college up and running in a very short time. How did your duties evolve as you moved closer to that date?
- Schroeder: My duties, working for the president and the board of trustees, of course, increased tremendously: correspondence, scheduling appointments, answering more phone calls, arranging luncheons and dinners, attending several board meetings each month, etc. It amazes me to this day at how the board was able to, first of all, hire administrators, and then they needed to hire faculty. They had to develop a curriculum; they had to advertise, and they had to prepare applications for students and find a place for the college. It's just amazing how all of that came together, nine months, or you could say eight months, after Dr. Staerkel became the president.

To go back a little bit, the college was started with a \$100,000 check from the Illinois Junior College Board, and that was received by the board in June of 1966. It was presented by Dr. Gerald Smith, who was the executive

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<sup>2</sup> Arthur Murray (born Moses Teichman) was an American ballroom dancer and businessman, who in 1922 started a dance studio chain that bears his name. In 2012 Arthur Murray Studios celebrated 100 years of teaching dance at over 260 Arthur Murray Dance Studios in 21 countries across the globe. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur\\_Murray#The\\_start\\_of\\_Arthur\\_Murray\\_Studios](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arthur_Murray#The_start_of_Arthur_Murray_Studios))

<sup>3</sup> Grab It Here was a chain of cash and carry stores that existed from 1903 to the end of the 20th century in Illinois and Indiana. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grab\\_It\\_Here](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Grab_It_Here))

director of the Illinois Junior College Board at the time. It's like, at the meeting, "Here is the money. Okay, here it is, board. It's up to you then to establish the college."

Pogue: You said the Parkland referendum passed overwhelmingly. Some of the other community colleges, located where there were four-year institutions, had people who felt there already was a higher-ed component; why do we need another? Was that something you heard early, when Parkland was being formed?

Schroeder: Yes, it was. I think they looked at Parkland as being more of a vocational technical [vo-tech] school—perhaps it might have a 60/40—be 60 percent vo-tech and then 40 percent for perhaps transfer and so on. But the relationship between the University of Illinois and Parkland was very good from the beginning, and it's doing very well today.

Pogue: What were the duties then of the office staff that worked with the other administrators? You said each one had their own administrative assistant?

Schroeder: Yes, because each was for a particular area. For instance, the dean of instruction, that secretary would work more with the dean on curriculum and typing. Of course, we used typewriters then; we didn't have computers. For each particular area... The dean of students would be working on student activities and things related to students, like the development of policies and procedures for students.

Pogue: What was it like to go to an early board meeting that first year?

Schroeder: It made me rather nervous the first time around. As I indicated, I did not know all of the board members, but they were very understanding. In the beginning, and for many years, the board meetings were very well attended by the press, especially when particular topics were listed on the agenda.

Pogue: Did you have any training on what to do at a board meeting?

Schroeder: The only training would have been through Charlie Zipprodt. I knew Charlie because he worked at Busey Bank.<sup>4</sup> Henry Green had come from Busey Bank to establish American National Bank. Charlie advised me and was of great help in how to take minutes and helping me identify who made the motion and who seconded it, before I actually knew these men.

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<sup>4</sup> Busey Bank dates back to 1868, when Samuel Busey and two co-founders opened the Busey Brothers and Company Bank. Busey is a leading financial services institution serving Illinois, Indiana and southwest Florida. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Busey\\_Bank#Corporate\\_history](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Busey_Bank#Corporate_history))

Pogue: As you got closer to opening day, what became the major duties and perhaps headaches that you were getting into, as you were getting close to the opening of Parkland College?

Schroeder: Keeping Dr. Staerkel's schedule. Of course, many things were happening at the time, and many people were wanting to see him, the dean of instruction in particular. Keeping the schedule was very challenging and trying to work people in, because he always wanted to see each person who asked for an appointment.

Pogue: As you were getting closer to the college opening, what kinds of calls were you getting from people? Were they the same, about job applications that you talked about earlier, or were there more detailed questions?

Schroeder: Among the questions was the parking; where are people going to park, because we're in downtown Champaign? If I have a class at 1615 West Springfield, how am I going to get back downtown in time for my next class? That's why the hours were staggered for classes to allow time for students to travel. Questions continued to be received regarding employment, location of various facilities, etc.

Pogue: You were in Champaign then; when did you move out of that building?

Schroeder: In the summer of 1973, the new campus became ready for occupancy. It left a real void in downtown Champaign. Downtown Champaign was thriving from 1967 to 1973, with all the students, staff, and the faculty. It was a great area.

Pogue: How did the area that is now the Parkland site get selected?

Schroeder: The board was interested in a site that would be more centrally located in the large district. Many sites were proposed, and with the help of a consultant, the site was chosen near the intersection of I-72 and I-57.

Pogue: How many questions or board meetings did it take to determine that the permanent campus was going to go on its ultimate site?

Schroeder: There were many, many board meetings in the beginning because there were so many decisions that the board had to make. Of course, the site was a major one. There were a number of sites that were submitted, and the board reviewed them but realized that they were going to need a consultant to help them make this decision. I remember a man by the name of Stan Leggett with Engelhardt, Engelhardt and Leggett [an educational consulting firm]. They were site consultants out of New York. He reviewed all the sites and visited all the sites.

I remember one meeting in particular when the board was discussing sites that Mayor Hobson of Rantoul came to the meeting and spoke very strongly of his feeling that the new college should be located in Rantoul

because of Chanute Air Force Base, which was located there at the time and had many, many service people.

Pogue: Were there other communities that were vying for the location of the permanent campus?

Schroeder: Yes, there were other areas around Champaign-Urbana. Sites near Mahomet, Rantoul and Urbana were submitted.

Pogue: When was the decision made to go with the current site? Was it shortly after the college began, or was it much later?

Schroeder: It seems to me that it was made in the spring of 1968. It's been a number of years ago; that's what I recall anyhow.

Pogue: What was it like to be moving to the permanent campus?

Schroeder: It was a monumental move, and we had many custodians who helped with the move and many other people. We were going from scattered locations in different buildings. Different connected buildings comprise Parkland, even today. Initially it was ten acres under roof. Of course, it's been enlarged since 1973.

Pogue: Was there easy access to that new site?

Schroeder: Yes, since it was near this intersection of I-72 and I-74. I don't believe that Bradley Avenue was four-lane at that time, but there was Bradley Avenue, and then the outer drives were completed.

Pogue: Going back to the original two years of the college, what were some of the other major topics discussed at the board meetings, beside the site issue, the location and rental agreements, the policies, and the hiring? What were some of the other issues faced by a brand-new college?

Schroeder: One very important one would have to do with what type of a college is it going to be? What are the buildings going to be like? So, Davis, McConnell and Ralston was hired. That firm was located in California, and they were educational consultants. The firm had employees who visited with faculty members about what they envisioned for the new campus. It was a wonderful concept because it made the faculty feel like they were really involved in the development of the college.

Pogue: Where did the new employees that were hired come from? The community college or junior college concept was fairly new in Illinois. Those most aware of it were part of a high school system, so where did Parkland find its people?

Schroeder: Once Parkland started advertising, there were even people from out of state—Nebraska and Kansas among other states—who applied for positions. There

were high school teachers in the district who applied for positions. It [Parkland] started with 1,338 students on September 25, and some of those students were part-time students, so we needed part-time instructors. I'm sure that there were people from the university even who were teaching, perhaps a part-time class at Parkland.

Pogue: What were your duties regarding the employment of new people?

Schroeder: Actually I did not have any decision-making to do with employment of new people, but I worked for Dr. Staerkel and the board. What would happen, before new people were hired, a personnel report was prepared and sent to the board. It included the name of the person, the area that the person was going to be teaching, and the recommended salary. There were different categories on the salary schedule that had been adopted by the board. They might be in category III, or they might be in category IV, depending on their type of education. Not all instructors, in the beginning, had degrees because some of the vo-tech areas didn't require degrees. All employment decisions were approved by the board.

Pogue: What was the evolution of the new campus? Were temporary buildings part of the campus when it started in seventy-three?

Schroeder: Yes, they continued to... For instance, the athletic area utilized the armory in Champaign. We did not have a gym until many years later. I believe that there were other areas too that didn't move initially.

Pogue: After you finished your first year working at Parkland for District 505, what did you think?

Schroeder: It was just amazing to look back on the year and how the college had started with a little three-room office in Urbana, and then the board had done a tremendous job of hiring Dr. Staerkel—He was the perfect person for that position—and how it all came together.

As I indicated earlier, eight months later, starting classes with 1,338 students, because [it had involved] hiring administrators, hiring faculty, advertising the college; it was just amazing. It seemed like kind of a blur, but it was incredible to be in on the beginning of a wonderful institution.

Pogue: How did policies to operate the college get developed?

Schroeder: Initially, I remember in the very beginning, one of the first things Dr. Staerkel did was to write the philosophy and objectives for the college and recommended that to the board. Some people who know me will know that I quote from that, about making decisions, because one of the points said, "Facts are the basis for decision-making." So, gather your facts and then make a decision. Don't hastily make a decision and then realize that you should



have had more information about a topic. The policies were developed by administrators and presented to the board for approval.

Pogue: You mentioned before that the college wasn't always named Parkland. When did that name come about?

Schroeder: In the beginning, it was Junior College District 505. The name was chosen in July of 1968, and as I recall in glancing at some papers, that is also when the permanent site was selected. Many names were submitted. It just so happened that, to the east of the campus, was a park, so someone suggested Parkland. I remember member, C. W. Barnes, a gentleman from Monticello, who was one of the founding board of trustee members, said, "Parkland Junior College." And Dr. Staerkel said, "Oh no, not 'Junior;' we want it to be known as Parkland College." That's how it came about, as I recall.

Pogue: At that juncture, did the word "Parkland" start to appear on all of the stationery and everything else?

Schroeder: It did. The board approved a logo, which was the tree, which was very appropriate, because eventually numerous trees were planted at Parkland and continue to be planted to this day. So, the logo was developed, and Parkland College, with a new address, 2400 West Bradley Avenue in Champaign [began to appear].

Pogue: Did you have any input on what would be in the temporary facility where you'd be working?

Schroeder: No, I didn't, other than to decide where to put my desk and the filing cabinets in the particular area. I remember having an office, and then, as they needed more space, sharing an office with the dean of instruction's secretary.

Pogue: How long were you in that temporary facility?

Schroeder: We did stay in the same facility downtown from 1967 to 1973.

Pogue: Once the campus moved to the current site, how many different places were you located before your retirement in 2000?

Schroeder: Our first office for many many years was located in the library on the second floor. And then eventually, when the administrative wing was built, our offices moved to the first floor of that particular wing.

Pogue: What did that new location allow you to do that you couldn't do in your downtown offices? Or was it worse?

Schroeder: The proximity of the board room, initially downtown Champaign, was just through a doorway from my office. When we moved out to the new campus, of course, our area designated was temporary. Being on the second floor of

the library, there weren't any meeting rooms. So, the board met over in the life science division, which wasn't as convenient, but it was certainly a good space for meetings.

Pogue: How many different college presidents have you worked for?

Schroeder: Actually, I have worked for five presidents; however, two of those...one was an acting, and one was an interim. I worked for Dr. William Staerkel from 1967 to September of 1986. Then, due to his [Dr. Staerkel's] illness, Dr. Donald Swank, the dean of instruction, became the acting president. He served as acting president until June of 1987. Then Dr. Paul Magelli became the president, and he was in that capacity for two years, eighty-seven to eighty-eight and eighty-eight to eighty-nine. Then Dr. Robert Poorman, who had retired as the president of Lincoln Land Community College in Springfield, was appointed as the interim president. He served in that capacity until July of 1990. And then Dr. Zelema Harris became the president. I was honored to work for her for the last ten years of my career.

Pogue: What did each of those presidents—perhaps even the acting ones—give to the college?

Schroeder: They each were very experienced. They had educational backgrounds of course, and each had his or her own particular style. Dr. Swank had been at Cuyahoga Community College for many years prior to coming to Parkland. Having been dean of students at Parkland and then dean of instruction for years, he was a very good fit to serve as an acting president. Dr. Magelli had been in education at the university and college level, and he brought many new ideas to the campus. Of course, Dr. Poorman, with his experience as being the president at Lincoln Land Community College, had much experience. Dr. Harris had a wealth of experience. She came from Kansas. She was very well received; she was the first female president and the first black president of our college.

Pogue: How did your duties change during your career at Parkland?

Schroeder: That's very interesting because when Dr. Staerkel came, he told me of his expectations for someone in my position. He said that all contact with the board of trustees would be made by him. So, the first twenty years that I worked for him, I did not have much contact with the board, other than I went to the board meetings, of course, and took the minutes of the meetings. But as for relaying information about the college or informing the board about what things were happening, Dr. Staerkel did that.

Dr. Swank followed that. Dr. Magelli more or less did too and Dr. Poorman. But then, when Dr. Harris came, she gave me more responsibility. She was new to the community, and she didn't know any of the people. So I became more of a liaison between the board and her, at her request.

Pogue: What were some of the major issues that took place in those early days of the college? You had a successful referendum in 1979, and you had to deal with the blizzard of seventy-eight. Could you walk through some of those, plus anything else you recall during your years with the school?

Schroeder: Major issues involved site selection, architect selection, finding enough space for temporary facilities, moving to the new campus, transitions occurring in administration, etc. Parkland has been very fortunate in that whenever a referendum was presented to the residents of the district, the referenda received approval.

I remember in particular in 1990—of course that's more recent to me—that Dr. Harris was hired and began working in July. A few months later, a tax transfer... It wasn't necessarily a tax transfer; a referendum question was presented to the residents for a vote. They were wanting to maintain the same rate, but just to have part of it be for a different fund. So, you'd be paying the same taxes, but they would go for another fund. She {Dr. Harris} just combed the district. She went out and spoke to different civic organizations, Lions Clubs, Rotaries throughout the district. It was just amazing that, in a few short months, that she had had contact with thousands of people, and the tax transfer was successful.

Pogue: Looking back to that blizzard of seventy-eight, has weather had an impact on Parkland?

Schroeder: Oh yes, it's very interesting when inclement weather occurs. It happened several times during my tenure, and the president's office had a listing of a number of radio stations and television stations throughout the district. I was the one appointed to call each of those members of the media and inform them that the college would be closed. It became necessary to use codes with certain stations because one television station reported one evening that we were going to be closed, and in fact we were open the next day, so there was some confusion.

It also became apparent that, with nursing students—they have a very rigid curriculum, and they have labs—decisions needed to be made about whether or not class would be held the next day. So 3:00 became the cutoff for evening students too, about whether or not classes would be held.

Pogue: In the 1980s there was the planetarium in eighty-seven and the college restructuring in eighty-eight. What do you remember about those issues?

Schroeder: The planetarium: Dr. Staerkel had appointed a committee in the eighties to gather information about planetariums. I remember being on a bus with a

group of people, a committee from Parkland, and going up to see the Adler Planetarium in Chicago.<sup>5</sup>

The [Staerke] planetarium, it's a wonderful facility, wonderful.<sup>6</sup> So many young children visit the planetarium, school children in particular. They have shows on Fridays and Saturdays, where the public can attend. The complex with the theatre is wonderful. Now the most recent addition to the campus... The student center is under construction right now, which spans the east side of the campus. I believe that it's to be opened in the summer of 2014.

On the west side of the campus, they are building something called the "Black Box," which will have a few classrooms. For the theater, it will be an opportunity for people who are actors who are participating in plays to have a place to go before the shows and store their costumes and so on.

The change in presidencies in 1988 prompted a very challenging, unsettling time when the college changed from six divisions, ten departments, some staff members were asked to leave the college.

Pogue: Were there any controversies about having a planetarium?

Schroeder: I think some people probably thought that it wasn't necessary. Dr. Staerke just wanted to provide as many opportunities as possible in east central Illinois. In particular, when the main campus was being built, he thought it was very important that it have an art gallery because people need to have a well-rounded education and be exposed to some culture.

Pogue: Did University of Illinois staff play any part with the planetarium?

Schroeder: I'm sure that they probably did, yes.

Pogue: You talked about the referendum that President Harris was involved in, in the 1990s. That also involved some campus expansion. How did the campus evolve from the temporary buildings to what's there now and what you've talked about that's being built?

Schroeder: We waited on state funding. Initially there were federal grants to build the college, and then the college waited on state funding. I remember in particular, a day care center was greatly needed. So the board approved going

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<sup>5</sup> The Adler Planetarium is a public museum dedicated to the study of astronomy and astrophysics. It was founded in 1930 by Chicago business leader Max Adler. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adler\\_Planetarium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Adler_Planetarium))

<sup>6</sup> William M. Staerke Planetarium at Parkland College in Champaign, Illinois is one of the 37 major planetarium in the United States. It is the second largest planetarium in the state, the largest being the Adler Planetarium in Chicago. The Staerke Planetarium provides science education programs and light show entertainment to as many as 40,000 people each year. It seats 144, and private group and school show reservations can be made beyond the regular public offerings. ([https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staerke\\_Planetarium](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Staerke_Planetarium))

ahead to build a day care center. Then the funding did come through, so they built a second day care center.

The Tony Noel Center is a wonderful facility on campus, made possible by the Tony Noel family. More recently, the Parkhill family in Champaign made a gift to the college, and so there is a beautiful automotive facility that's named after the Parkhills.

Pogue: As your duties changed over time, when did technology start to play a role?

Schroeder: Oh my, I remember in the beginning I had an IBM [International Business Machines] Executive typewriter.<sup>7</sup> I had never typed on one of those before. When you typed a letter, it looked beautiful, but it was proportionate spacing. Then a typewriter came along, called the [IBM] Selectric typewriter. It had a little, round element that moved across, on the inside of the typewriter, whenever you typed. And then something called the MTST [IBM Magnetic Tape Selectric Typewriter] came along. That typewriter, it included a desk, and you typed, and you recorded on tapes. After that came something called the Mag Card [IBM]. The Mag Card, you would type, and then you would have a black card and the information would record on this card.

It was interesting, because I was still using the Mag Card, and computers came along. I had a computer in my office that I didn't know how to use. Dr. Staerkel initially said, "We don't have time for you to learn the computer." So, I continued with the Mag Card for a while. Then eventually—we had wonderful technicians, IT [Information Technology] people at Parkland—I learned to use the computer.

Pogue: What challenges did you face learning the uses of the computer, and by the time you left in 2000, what were you doing on the computer?

Schroeder: I was trying to grow as technology changed. It **was** quite a challenge because I'm not a real techie person. But I knew that I had to master at least the skills that I needed to do the work for the president, preparing board materials, preparing letters. The computer was wonderful because you could type a rough draft, and then you could go back and change it and so on. It saved a lot of time, and I enjoyed using it and communicating with other areas of the campus too, via email.

Pogue: Roughly how many board meetings did you attend in your career?

Schroeder: (laughs) Oh, I would have no idea. I believe that today the board is still meeting once a month, perhaps not in August. In the beginning, there were

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<sup>7</sup> Introduced in 1954, the Model Executive electric typewriter was one of the most advanced typebar-based typewriters ever produced. Providing a more typeset appearance than a standard typewriter. (<http://www.decadecounter.com/vta/articleview.php?item=78>)

numerous meetings, throughout my career really, especially when there were different topics.

State law requires that you provide notice of any public meeting. Of course, all meetings are open to the public, unless the board decides to go into executive session. There's a limit on what can be discussed in closed session. I've never thought about how many meetings I attended. I'm sure it was hundreds and hundreds over a span of thirty-four years.

Pogue: What was the most unusual board meeting you attended?

Schroeder: There were some challenging times at Parkland in the late eighties. The board used a consultant, and I remember the consultant coming out of a board meeting, and I found a way for him to avoid the press and get away before the press could get to him. There was one board meeting one time that lasted until 2:00 in the morning. It was a controversial issue. So, those are a couple of them that stand out.

Pogue: Did many people from the community attend board meetings at Parkland?

Schroeder: They did at times, depending on what was on the agenda. The agenda, at that time, you had to give twenty-four hours' notice. I sent it out to all the media. I believe today, but I'm not sure, that it might be forty-eight hours' notice to the media and the public before a meeting can be held.

Pogue: Were the biggest draws for the public issues relating to taxes, budgets, and referendums, or were there other topics that would draw people to the board meetings?

Schroeder: Yes, probably mostly on spending. Or, if there was going to be a report on a new program, someone might question, how's this program going to be viable, and what do you expect the enrollment to be? Are the people going to be employable after taking this particular program?

Pogue: How many members of the press were at these meetings?

Schroeder: It would just depend. Sometimes the local television stations were there. The *News-Gazette* [Champaign, IL] always had a reporter. The *Urbana Courier*, in the beginning, always had a reporter. Basically, [it was] just local media. We didn't get media from throughout the district. The League of Women Voters usually had a representative at the meetings.

Pogue: We didn't really talk about what the district is like, as far as geographical boundaries. What makes up Parkland District 505 today?

Schroeder: It's comprised of approximately fifty-four communities. It includes parts of twelve counties. It spans all the way from Piper City to the north, Arcola to the south, Monticello to the west, and St. Joe to the east.

Pogue: Did all of these districts belong to Parkland at the beginning, when you were first formed, or were they added on throughout the years?

Schroeder: There were some high school districts that were added, but very few. And then many, many years ago, the State of Illinois divided the whole state into community college districts.

Pogue: Were there any controversies relating to whether districts would be in Parkland or not in Parkland?

Schroeder: Yes, I think that there probably were some issues. Parkland was a premier institution and had many different offerings. So people were anxious to come to Parkland for in-district tuition fees, because out-of-district fees were quite a bit higher.

Parkland had a nursing program and a vet tech [Veterinary Technician] program. Those were what they called selective admissions, where people applied for those programs. You could apply, but it didn't necessarily mean that you would get in right away. I remember seeing lines of students, hopeful that they would get in to the nursing program because there were a limited number of students that the programs could take. Of course people were eager to get there and be first in line, so they'd be included.

Pogue: Were athletics an important part of the early days of Parkland?

Schroeder: Yes. We had a basketball team, then. I think the importance of athletics probably exists today. Some people think that Parkland should have a football team, but the board of trustees has never approved football. In my opinion likely never will because Parkland is a two-year college, and football is a very expensive sport. There are many other sports that the college has, and among them would be golf, baseball, soccer, and track. They've had some very good basketball, baseball, and golf teams.

Pogue: What is the Parkland Foundation?

Schroeder: The Parkland Foundation is basically composed of members in the community and attracts funding for different areas of the campus. The board really is charged with providing the foundation staff with the wisdom with which to make informed decisions.

Our foundation has been very successful. Carl Meyer just retired as the executive director of the foundation. He had been with the foundation for fifteen years and raised over \$25 million for the college. The foundation tries to identify donors who would like to make a gift to the college. Scholarships are very important. Students are always needing money to go to school, and scholarships sometimes make the difference of whether a student comes to college or does not.

Pogue: What involvement have you had with the foundation?

Schroeder: I do serve as a member of the board—the foundation meets quarterly—and I have gone with the executive director to visit potential donors. I think it's important, as a retiree, to give back to the college. I would like to see all retirees remember the institution and perhaps contribute to the foundation for scholarships, so that others would have an opportunity to experience education.

Pogue: When did you go on the foundation board?

Schroeder: I've been on the foundation board since the fall of 2011.

Pogue: How did you get onto the board?

Schroeder: I was actually contacted by Carl Meyer and by Jim Ayers, the president of the foundation. They decided to increase the number of members of the foundation board, and I am the first retired member of the staff to ever serve on the foundation board. One of the prerequisites would be to be a donor to the college. I have been very fortunate in endowing two scholarships in memory of my late husband. We both grew up on farms, and so I endowed a scholarship in agriculture. I also endowed a scholarship for nursing students, because we need more nurses.

Pogue: Did Parkland have a dress code of any fashion?

Schroeder: Yes, they did. I remember vividly, Oscar Lanphar, the first business manager. We initially could not wear slacks. We had to wear skirts and matching jackets. It was quite a long time before he approved of women wearing slacks. If you did, they had to have a matching jacket. It was very interesting because this day and age, you wouldn't think of telling a staff member in the public sector what he or she would have to wear.

Pogue: How long did the dress code stay in existence?

Schroeder: You know, it did stay in existence for a couple of years. I don't exactly remember when. Oscar Lanphar was from Evanston. He'd been a business manager in the school system, and he was an interesting fellow. I remember the first time I met him, I said to him, "You can call me Rachel." And he said, "Oh no, you will be known as Miss Schroeder." He never addressed secretaries by their first name. It was always preceded by "Miss."

Pogue: As you think back on your experiences at Parkland, what tasks were the most enjoyable?

Schroeder: Gee, I really enjoyed everything. One of the most enjoyable ones happened in December of ninety-one. It was a tradition that began, and it's called a holiday reception. It exists to this day. In December, the Parkland president, the board



of trustees and the foundation sponsor a holiday reception. All staff members, current and retirees, are invited to this reception. It's an opportunity for people to mingle, and you feel like you're just one big family. I remember that in particular.

I also enjoyed throughout my tenure creating and maintaining files, important records of the college. Today we have an archive department. I was out at Parkland a couple of years ago, and I was amazed to see still the typewritten copies—original official copies—of minutes from 1966 to 2000. I'm sure that many of those are probably now on computer files, but they still had hard copies of many years.

Pogue: My last question is, how has Parkland been accepted by the community over its forty-seven-year history? It started with a positive referendum; how has it maintained itself?

Schroeder: It's always had a good relationship with the University of Illinois. There are dual credit classes that are offered in connection with the high schools in the district; 2+2 programs with Illinois State University.<sup>8</sup> There's a pathway program... It maintains the popularity; it's a quality institution. When students attend Parkland, they are taught by people who have at least a master's and many have doctorates.

They also have classes for older people, quite an array of various programs. Residents in the district receive timetables in the U.S. mail that tell of all these programs. It just seems like any program that you mention or interest that you might have, you can find in this particular timetable. You can even take beginning computer, from teaching you how to turn the computer on. They have travelogues. They have a connection with Christie Clinic [a Medical Group Practice located in Champaign, IL]. In October—this is the fall of 2013, of course—they will have a series, where people can go and learn more about health.

It's just been very well received. And as I mentioned before, the funding for the Tony Noel building and the lovely gift for the Parkhill automotive area. Parkland is affordable; a lot of financial aid is available and scholarships. They have a wonderful president this day and age with Tom Ramage. It's just very well thought of. It has many connections in the area. If you were to be a patient at the local hospitals, you'll find many nurses wearing a patch on their smock or on their jacket that indicates Parkland College Health Careers-Nursing. The hospitals have collaborated with Parkland very well.

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<sup>8</sup> A 2+2 program is attending a community college for two years, then transferring to a college or university for another two years. (<https://www.collegeraptor.com/find-colleges/articles/questions-answers/22-college-program/>)

Pogue: Rachel, I want to thank you very much for sharing your history at Parkland College, beginning in 1966, and bringing us to the current year, also for explaining your duties as one of the first employees of the college and how the college expanded from its small location in Urbana. Thank you.

Schroeder: Thank you for the opportunity.

(end of transcript)