

## Interview with Dr. James F. Paul

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Interview # 1: July 16, 2013

Interviewer: Phil Pogue

Pogue: This is Phil Pogue. We're on the campus of Kankakee Community College. It's July 16, 2013. We're involved with the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library Oral History Project on Illinois Community Colleges, and we have with us Jim Paul, who will be talking about Kankakee Community College and his experiences with the college. So welcome, Jim, to the project and to begin with could you give us some family and educational background about yourself?

Paul: Thank you, Phil. Yes, I'm glad to help out in the project. I was born on January 10, 1946, in Evansville, Indiana, the oldest of nine children born to Philip and Leona Paul, and I, at the age of fourteen, went to St. Meinrad Seminary High School for all of the high school years, graduated from high school in 1964, and continued on at St. Meinrad College of Liberal Arts, still in the seminary, graduating in 1968 with a history degree. And at that point I decided to leave the seminary and that career choice of being a priest and went off to Southern Illinois University in Carbondale, where I was enlisted in the history department as a teaching assistant, thank goodness, and I pursued my graduate work there, completing all the course work in 1970, but not the thesis required for the master of arts degree. So I was married to my wife, Patricia, in March, 1970, March 21<sup>st</sup> being our anniversary, looking for a job after that summer semester of 1970, and found one as an insurance adjuster. And when the manager, the interviewer, asked me which city I would like to go to—Rock Island, Moline, Kokomo, Muncie, and

several others—I said I didn't know where those places were and then he offered Kankakee, and I said I do know where that's at on Interstate 57 and I'll take it. So for two years then, 1970 to 1972, I was an insurance adjuster in Kankakee and Iroquois counties with our office in Kankakee. I finished my Master of Arts thesis, commuting back and forth to Carbondale during those two years of 1970 to '72, and in August of 1972 was in the right place at the right time and was hired as a history professor at Kankakee Community College. Of course back then we weren't called professors, but teaching managers or some type of managers - it was a business model. So I began teaching at KCC in 1972 and remained there until I retired in 2006, although I did continue teaching online part-time for three more years until 2009. And now I am not employed by the college in any way, but we're still very much connected.

Pogue: What made you want to consider a community college teaching position?

Paul: I always wanted to go into teaching, and at Southern Illinois University I did conduct lectures and classroom discussions for the professors, and I enjoyed it so much—it was on the higher education level—and I knew that in the community college system, just starting in Illinois, that a Master of Arts degree was required, not a Ph.D. or a Doctor of Arts, which I eventually did gain in 1986. But I thought that was the level I wanted to come in at, and the community college system did offer unique opportunity for people that were not otherwise going to pursue a higher education, and offered what I think is true, a democracy in education opportunity.

Pogue: What have been your assignments at Kankakee?

Paul: Since 1972 I have taught many courses, but in those early years I taught Western Civilization, to 1815, and 1815 to the present. I began teaching the Introduction to Philosophy course in 1976 when it was allowed to be taught for the first time, and we will come back to this point I'm sure. And then in 1980, a spin-off of the Introduction to Philosophy course, Death and Dying. Then in mid to late 80s I team taught the Ascent of Man course with Lou Anderson, a colleague and friend of mine. In 1990 I began teaching the Latin American History, which was my specialty at Southern Illinois University, but it had not been a transfer course until 1990, and so there was no reason to teach it because students could not transfer the credits until then. I also every two years took students, beginning in 1979, to Europe, the History of Western Civilization through Independent Study and Travel, and every two years we would go to a different European site---countries - - so a student could take three of those courses and accumulate twelve hours, four hours each, of transferrable credit. It also gave me an opportunity to see much of Europe and I appreciated that immensely. During those years I was also involved in many other activities. I was in charge of in-service programs. Towards the end of my teaching career, between 2002 and 2004, was the faculty sponsor for the Baccalaureate Scholars Program at KCC. Let's see, I think I'll stop at that point and take a breath and then maybe we'll follow up with some of the other activities that I've done over the years.

Pogue: When you talked about the philosophy class, what was the issue there?

Paul: All right. When I came to teach at Kankakee Community College in 1972, it was like a "Stalag 17" experience. We had to drive by a guard shack where the

security would check us. Dr. Jack Samlin was the president then, and it was a very interesting petty dictatorship I would say. He, in 1976, I'm pretty sure it was '76, was indicted for embezzlement of college funds, he was found guilty, sent to prison and since then has died. He did not allow philosophy to be taught. It was in the catalog. I had a minor in philosophy and so as soon as he was gone, my division chair asked if I would be willing to teach the course, and I said, "Yes!" I suppose Dr. Samlin did not want the youth or anyone else in the Kankakee area corrupted by the youth. He was very conservative. Anyway, from that point on philosophy was taught and was a very enriching experience for me because I was a history major, but then I taught Death and Dying also, as I mentioned, and so I felt like I should pursue a degree in my doctoral program at Illinois State University that blended the two, intellectual history, which I did. And so in 1986 I received that degree, Intellectual History or the History of Ideas, and I just love the History of Ideas. And so I blended the two disciplines, history and philosophy.

Pogue: When you talk about taking students to Europe for independent study every two years, what kind of activities did the students get into?

Paul: Okay. We did all of the course work before we left. We had three months of intense study, beginning usually in April and going through May, June, and either the trip began in late July or early August. They would have seminars once a month, lengthy sessions in which there would be lectures with all kinds of audio-visual conducted by myself. They would have to write papers about where we were planning to visit--historical sites. They would have to even specify what they were going to do with their free time. If they were going to have some free

time in the afternoon, they would have to tell me what they were going to do with their free time, what museum they were going to visit, where they were going to have dinner if that was an opportunity, why they were making that choice. And so there was none of this where we would arrive at a location, let's say in England or France or Germany, and they would come to me and ask, "Well, Dr. Paul, what are we going to do now?" They'd have all these plans then ahead of time. So their papers and their free time independent study, their independent activities, as well as the take-home final exam, would have all been completed before the trip itself. And the take-home final exam had maps on it, of each of the cities, so it was a pretty good orientation to what they were going to experience.

Pogue: Did you have any challenges because of what was going on in the world from 1979?

Paul: We may have had some disruptions in airports, some elaborate security checks, but nothing in the sense that disrupted the whole travel plan. The average age of the groups that traveled with me was forty-five because, as you know, the community college student is not just typically eighteen or nineteen years old.

Pogue: What kind of special recognition have you had with the community college?

Paul: I have had recently an honor that I'm still on cloud nine from. I was asked to deliver the commencement address on May 11 of 2013, and I think I am the only retiree that's ever been asked to deliver the commencement address. So I was so overwhelmed and honored by that. As I mentioned, I was faculty sponsor for the Baccalaureate Scholars Program and I enjoyed that immensely. We conducted debates or point-counterpoint forums for the community on issues like "The

Youth of Today,” “Learning Too Much Violence from the Media,” and other topics of that nature. In 1990 I was given the Alumni Recognition Award which was very exciting for me as well. I had other awards too from different universities and colleges, but those stand out in my mind.

Pogue: Could you give us some background about the formation of Kankakee Community College? Although you came in the period after it was formed, give us a brief overview as to how it developed.

Paul: Yes, a group of concerned citizens went ahead and pursued the community college formation back in 1966, and the first classes were offered downtown Kankakee in one of the rooms of the Kankakee Hotel in 1968, that fall semester. Then eventually the campus was opened up out on, just south of Kankakee River off of River Road. I understand that Merlin Karlock, one of the original board of trustees’ members, told the board attorney, Don Zeglis, that he was aware of land available, almost 200 acres of land, on the south bank of the Kankakee River. So the attorney, Don Zeglis, did pursue that and eventually the land was bought and this is where the campus sits today. When I was hired in 1972, I taught in the barracks style one-story buildings, and there’s about four or five still remaining on the west campus. And the brick, phase one and phase two that we’re doing this interview in—I guess this would be phase two—was going up 1970, ‘72, and in ’74 the three stories of this red brick structure was completed enough for the humanities, social sciences and student services to move in here. Before that, before 1974, business and nursing classes were already here. So this was very exciting in 1974. Then over the years that I was here, more expansion has taken

place—the George Ryan Activities Center was built and the Prairie was constructed in 1993, the Workforce Development Center in 2004, and the newest building was the Arts and Sciences building with 41,000 square feet, constructed in 2007. And well, I guess they've also renovated the Health Careers Center for Excellence, which is on the first floor of this area, back in August of 2008 so they could get up to state of the art standards. Also, the east part of what I call phase two was extended in the early 2000s as well. So constant improvement and beautification of the campus took place under Dr. Horton in the 1970s and 80s. I think it's a beautiful campus, it has a three-hole golf course that you can play several times in several different ways to make nine holes if you want to, and the price is right—it's free. Yes, it's just a beautiful location and I've experienced a lot of changes over the years.

Pogue: As to the counties—Kankakee, Iroquois, Ford, Grundy, Livingston, and Will are parts of the territory of Kankakee—what are the biggest school communities?

Paul: I'd say Kankakee District 111 is the biggest; Herscher School District is another large school district [also Bradley Bourbonnais Community High School and school districts]; Clifton Central, of course, in Clifton, Illinois; Iroquois West in Gilman—those are in Iroquois County, Clifton, and Gilman—Watseka school system also. Kankakee and Iroquois Counties are the two full counties within District 520, and then of course the district does encompass bits and pieces of Ford, Grundy, Livingston, counties.

Pogue: How did the college get its name?

Paul: The Kankakee River is the most important landmark in the area. The Potawatomie referred to the Kankakee either that way or “Te-yar-ac-ke,” and it means from their language low land, or swampy country. The French-Canadians who came into the area changed tian-kakeek to Kankakee and so we have the name changing. So the name takes its place from the river.

Pogue: As to the French-Canadian that you mentioned, you’ve been involved with a project called “The French-Canadian Heritage Wall.” What is all that about?

Paul: Just recently, well actually it’s been about a year ago now, August of 2012, we had the grand opening of a fifteen foot by four foot-wide wall, like a mural, on a display panel and called, just as you mentioned, “The French-Canadian Heritage Wall.” And it’s a tribute to my students in the Western Civilization course, who beginning in the year 2000 conducted interviews of the French-Canadian descendants so that their oral history could be compiled. And they also—not only did this work with videotaping and collecting photographs and creating the person’s family tree—but they also transcribed the interviews. We had some work from one of the transcription classes at first, and then eventually it came down to my students doing this, and this is before that special “Dragon” software that’s out there now. They did it themselves by taking little bits and pieces from audio and laying it down in script. It was ten percent of their Western Civilization course grade, so it was enough to make a difference, especially if they didn’t do anything. So, anyway they enjoyed doing that work and we did create a website, “The French-Canadian Interview Project” website, and on that website are



nineteen individuals of French-Canadian descent—their interviews, the transcripts and the work of my students.

Pogue: What did you learn from that work done by the students?

Paul: I learned that I really enjoy local history and I've gotten more involved in local history now. I have been mentored by Vic Johnson, who's a local author, and he encouraged me to conduct the interviews. And so I thought, well my students can help do this, and lo and behold, how well they did. I did not even visit them while they were conducting the interviews. I couldn't because that was all happening simultaneously. They were doing like six a semester—it was hard to be in six places at once—impossible. Anyway, they did it themselves, it worked out quite well, and I learned to really appreciate local history. And I have now gotten involved in several of the local historical societies and I'm on the Kankakee County Historic Preservation Commission.

Pogue: Do you perceive more walls being done at the college?

Paul: It could happen. I think that the funds must be raised. What happened for this wall is that some of the individuals of French Canadian descent who were interviewed, or their families, made donations to have something like this done. Because the interviews aren't being done any more. I'm retired and I don't have any students and don't have access to the equipment, so the interviews are not being done. And so the wall is a way to convey the message that this is important and maybe some type of effort can be done to continue investigation into the history of these individuals.

Pogue: Has the district gone through any strikes or how have labor relations gone within the district?

Paul: Yes, I was very active as a faculty member in the collective bargaining process. In 1986, I finished my Doctor of Arts work at Illinois State University and a couple of years later when our faculty president's tenure was up, two 2-year terms, the nominating committee asked me, Chuck Smead in particular, if I would consider being the next faculty president, faculty association president, and I thought about it, and I thought well "I'm not writing my dissertation any more, it's time to give back." And so I said "Yes." What happened was this - I don't know, I was trying to check the year, but it was probably in 1984 that the Illinois Legislature passed a law, or the public act that allowed collective bargaining. And in the fall of that year, several of us met at the Ramada Inn, just off of Highway 50 over here—it's no longer the Ramada Inn—anyway, we met there to decide whether or not we should pursue unionization so that we could collectively bargain. And we decided that we would and in October of 1984, we had to decide then in the election whether to affiliate with the Illinois Federation of Teachers, the Illinois Education Association or no affiliation. And we decided to align with the Illinois Federation of Teachers. In May of 1985 we had our first contract negotiations and they went on until 1986. They stalled in February of 1986, we picketed outside the armory, the Kankakee armory where the basketball team was playing at that time, and we were simply expressing our view that we deserved a contract. And at the end of February, February 25 of 1986, the Kankakee Community College Faculty Association took a strike vote and it passed with ninety percent support. Well,

sides were being drawn, the line was in the sand - on May 5 1986, at the eleventh hour, faculty and the board reached a tentative agreement, and on May 7, 1986, the faculty ratified its first contract. I think - and we'll probably come back to this as some of the significant historical moments in the college - this was pivotal because before the right to collectively bargain, there were as I mentioned petty dictatorships—not just on the president level but in the departmental levels. Some department faculty were getting different raises than other department faculty, some were getting no raises. It was like you had to beg for what you received and there was no democratic exchange of ideas. That first contract in 1986 made the difference for all of us, and that was one of the significant turning points. That was the only strike vote that was ever taken, the strike did not materialize, fortunately, a contract was agreed to, and since then there's been a contract agreed to every three or four years.

Pogue: What did you learn from being a president of a new union?

Paul: Leadership is (laughs), is something that you're not born into (laughs), you just have to kind of learn it by the school of hard knocks. I accepted that role and I did pretty well in that role, and I served as faculty president from 1988 to 1992. And then, lo and behold, high school faculty teachers from Clifton Central and other schools asked if I would run against the president of the Kankakee Area Federation of Teachers, our local. Oh my - well, I did, and to make a long story short, I did win that election. So then I became the leader of the Kankakee Area Federation of Teachers in the early '90s until the late 1990s. Then we eventually merged with Local 604 out of Joliet and when I retired, that merger had taken

place and I was a vice president of that local. But I learned a lot, I appreciated a lot, I saw that some union people saw the union as an end in itself (laughs), and some people saw it as a means to an end. I always saw it as a means to an end, to improving the working conditions and the salary and fringe benefits.

Pogue: As to the historic events in the life of the college you talked about the potential strike and the settlement and the history of the collective bargaining agreement, what else has been historic?

Paul: I think that there are several ... I think that, as I mentioned before, the indictment of Dr. Jack, or Dr. John Samlin in 1976 was pivotal and his trial and his conviction. The building expansion, the education opportunities expansions at the college, that's also been very, very significant, but I can't think of any one year, except when the buildings opened up and had their grand openings as I mentioned earlier. One item that hasn't been mentioned yet came in 1980 when the board passed a sabbatical leave policy. It was so interesting—I was pursuing my—I had just gotten accepted into the Doctor of Arts program at Illinois State University and I was going to get that degree, but I had to be a resident for one semester. Hmm, well it's impossible to be a resident for a semester when you're fully employed without taking a four or five month leave of absence and not (laughs) having any money. So I went to the board, made an appeal to the board - probably it was in 1979, I don't have the year in front of me - and I asked for them to develop a sabbatical leave policy. They in essence said no, they couldn't do it for me at that point in time. They understood that I couldn't get the degree, even though they were encouraging professional development and higher education

than what we had. Well, a couple of months later they passed a sabbatical leave policy, I quickly applied for it, and I was the first one to get it. So that was a very important historical moment. I mentioned the collective bargaining already, the campus beautification that took place under Dr. Horton , and the overall presidency of Dr. Larry Huffman from July of 1987 to March of 2001—those fourteen years, the morale out here at this campus, on this site, was unbelievable, just unbelievable—the place to be. Of all the community colleges in the State of Illinois, I think this was the place to be. Not everybody would agree with that, but this is what I think. I think those are some of the pivotal historic events of the college.

Pogue: Going to your mentioning of President Huffman, what was it that seemed to make this a wonderful place to work?

Paul: He knew our names. He knew all of our names. He would come in dressed up like Caesar for our fun days and participate with us. He was one of us.

Pogue: And as to the community, how has Kankakee related to the community?

Paul: A cultural oasis. There are several cultural oases in the area—Olivet Nazarene University being one, the local libraries, the art galleries, maybe even Barnes & Noble and Starbucks—but this campus offers so much to so many people and it's open now on the weekends and it's accessible and the tuition is still a good deal for the money, even though it keeps going higher and higher every year. It's something that the administrators have always, and especially the current administrator, Dr. John Avendano—he really wants us to be involved in the community, he's connected with many of us who are retired to continue doing our

work on preserving local history and continuing relationship with the community. And so I think it's an ongoing process.

Pogue: Well you mentioned that you serve Iroquois County—that's kind of a far-away location and a large rural area—how did KCC deal with that population?

Paul: They've had their ups and downs. Most recently though the southern extension center in Watseka has been improved and expanded upon, just within the last month. So there's been efforts not only to open up a northern extension on Route 50 on land that was donated by Merlin Karlock, that same original board member, a state of the art building going up as the northern extension where the classrooms with all the up to date technology. And they're going to have new courses offered there, like massage therapy. Down there in Watseka, the southern satellite is also going to experience expansion along the same order.

Pogue: You talked about the northern extension. Where is that located?

Paul: It's in Kankakee, as you start going north out of the City of Kankakee, going just east of Mound Road Cemetery and south of Lowe's, there is this building going up and it will be finished, I think, in 2014.

Pogue: How did your teaching area change during the time that you spent here at KCC?

Paul: The administration, I'll say this, has always been supportive of my creativity, and when I first started teaching it was the rather typical lecture-discussion. But by 1980 I had taken a few risks and among some of the things that I started doing was impersonating historical and philosophical individuals in the classroom—where the students have to also role play and they were required to ask me, or this person, whether it be King Louis XIV, Alexander the Great, or Dr. Friedrich

Nietzsche, a question. And that would demand one hundred percent participation. And I have done that since 1980 until I retired in 2006. I developed thirteen individuals for the history and philosophy classrooms. I did Alexander the Great, the Renaissance man of the 1400's in Italy. I did the Spanish conquistador, Martin Luther, King Louis XIV, a British parliamentarian during the American Revolutionary War, a Latin American revolutionary in the movement against Spain in the late 1700's, Napoleon Bonaparte, Karl Marx, Dr. Friedrich Nietzsche, a World War I British captain, an author, Robert Graves, Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, Juan Peron - and since I've retired I'm doing a local French-Canadian pioneer who was the first mayor of Bourbonnais in 1875 and later a mayor of Kankakee in 1891, George Letourneau. I've taken risks - I began team testing where students would work together in finishing the quizzes. They would have six or seven quizzes in each course. The mid-term and final they were on their own though. So my hypothesis was that if they could study together for those quizzes and work together, they would also study together for the midterm or the final, although they had to take it individually. And I think that worked to an extent. They seemed to enjoy taking my quizzes that way. There's been a few other things, but we've talked about those already with the interviews of the French-Canadian descendants, which I think was somewhat unusual to undertake but those are the most important teaching techniques I think.

Pogue: Have the students changed during your tenure at the college?

Paul: I suppose they have. I understand, talking to my colleagues now, that they tend to offer more remediation courses now on the college level so that they can get into

English I and the math courses and make a success out of those courses. I don't know what the reason for that is, but I know that towards the end of my career at the college in 2006, we were dealing with outcomes and assessments a lot, although it did not impede my creativity. I still was able to do in the classroom what I wanted to do. And like I said, the administration always supported me, even allowing me to purchase costumes with our budgets, and I thought that was phenomenal because I just didn't have the money to go out and buy a World War II German uniform that would accommodate Field Marshall Erwin Rommel, just to use that as an example, or the different lacy items that King Louis XIV would wear or the cape. So the college has been very supportive of me in that respect.

Pogue: Did the college have a procedure that all instructors had to do certain things to help prepare the students understand what was happening in the classroom?

Paul: Yes, we had our expectations, our behavioral objectives, the outcomes that had to be measured, and we had to specify the measuring device, the measuring technique, and so on.

Pogue: The online - you talked at the end you were teaching online courses. How was that different from what you had always done before?

Paul: It wasn't that much different. Jeff Bathe who was the online learning guru when I was learning to teach online, said "Jim, don't be worried about this. Don't be afraid of it. You can do everything online that you do in the classroom face to face." I said "What about the impersonations?" "Well, we can videotape those and they can get them all on a DVD purchased for a nominal amount in the bookstore. They can watch that and they can ask you questions online, and you can answer as



that person online.” I said “Okay, and we have all the discussions?” “Yes, all the same discussions online.” The same quiz, the same content of quizzes and the major exams, so I had to do something though I hadn’t done, for example, in the Death and Dying classes, I had never typed up my lecture notes. In all the other classes I at least had hand written notes, but in the Death and Dying class, which I developed in 1980, I just never did put them into some organized notes. (laughs) I just went with what was important at the time and it was a very emotional course to begin with and it really worked. But now I had to lay down my thoughts, which I did, and I think that was good because now I have them all written down if I ever want to do anything else with those. And so teaching online was a wonderful experience and I would recommend it to everyone.

Pogue: How did you get to know your individual students being online?

Paul: I got to know them only by name, saw no photographs, and so it was almost perfect in a way because in the classroom when you see people face to face, no matter what, you still get some first impressions, second impressions, and then, you know, it might be distorted what your impression is. Whereas online, they can come to you almost in a de-personified way. There is no individual there except the name and what you’re grading then is what that name produces in your class, and I found that very, very significant.

Pogue: Did you do more with online than what you did with the regular classroom?

Paul: No, I think they felt it was more because it required each of them to read the material and take ownership, whereas in the classroom they can piggyback on somebody else. Like in a discussion, they might just say “Oh, yes, I agree with

that person.” Or in a debate “Oh, well, that’s what I had to say too.” Whereas online they couldn’t see anyone else’s remarks until they posted themselves. Then it would open up and they could see what other people had said.

Pogue: How did you work with high school history departments or the four-year college history teachers?

Paul: I got to know the Kankakee High School teachers when I conducted the north central evaluation of the history department back in the 1980s for them. And we connected, although we didn’t stay connected too much. I got other connections through the union, believe it or not, because I got to know so many other teachers through the networking of the union. When we would meet in the local office, the representatives would talk not only about union business but about their disciplines. Or at conferences we’d talk about our disciplines. When I went to the Illinois History Symposium I got to meet other community college faculty and other four-year college and university faculty that were in history and what they were doing, and I really appreciated the Illinois History Symposium. I was on the Faculty Advisory Committee to the Illinois Board of Higher Education for several years in the late ‘80s and early’90s and I was the Academic Affairs chair as one of those subcommittees. We hosted the Faculty Advisory Committee here at Kankakee Community College—that was one of the prerequisites for being on the Faculty Advisory Committee that you host the council at one point during the two or three years that you were on the council. I think I was on it for three years. So there’s many ways to network and those were just a few of them.

Pogue: Had Kankakee undergone changes in grading, department, division assignments and your relations with the transfer certificate in adult ed programs?

Paul: The only thing I can add to what I've said is that, as I mentioned earlier, remediation has become a more significant factor at the college now from what I've been told. It was starting when I left in 2006 and I think one way to make sure that all the students have reached the same level at least before they enter a certain class, that's a transferable level, is that they have those standards met through remediation. A difficult thing in the classroom is, as you know, especially in the community college classroom, at least I think you know it but you don't know exactly, what caliber of student you have out there. They could really be students who have excelled in the past and want to excel in the future, and then you have students that could care less (laughter) and are going to the class because somebody told them they had to. And that's the hard part, trying to address all of them at once. And so in doing the different classroom activities like I did, I think I was able to do that. At least some time during the semester I was able to connect with everyone and maybe that made a difference.

Pogue: Were there any state, federal or local laws that impacted your teaching assignment?

Paul: I think the only one that I can conjure up here is that Illinois Public Relations Act of 1984 that allowed collective bargaining. I think it was 1984, but I tried to look up the date for that before the interview and I couldn't find it. But I know we didn't pursue collective bargaining until that law was passed.

Pogue: Did any of the major social and historical issues of the United States impact the college, such as Vietnam, civil rights, the loss of a local industry, the various recessions and the state finances?

Paul: The recessions and local economy went through ups and downs, especially when Roper, the Roper factory closed, and there were other factories that closed as well, and we had to retool in a way so that we could offer the courses that individuals needed to become skilled in going in another direction. 9/11 had a big impact and we, on the anniversary of 9/11 and even that day, made sure that we addressed the needs of our students, their grief and their emotions. And on the anniversaries we took time out to have special speeches, talks, kind of like rallies in the courtyard out here on the south part of the campus. So we were very considerate about that.

Pogue: What have been the challenges to teaching at the community college and the rewards?

Paul: As I mentioned, the challenge was addressing everyone in the classroom because that's our duty. I think the reward for me, especially when I had dynamic debates or dynamic role playing activities, is that I and the student became one, and I think that's an important thing to always consider. I miss that part of teaching. Whenever anyone asks me "Don't you miss teaching?" Well, I do miss that part where I'm actively engaged with the student and I'm not treating the student from a higher level to their lower level. No, it's not like that at all, its become the same level and we have a dynamic exchange of ideas, either through my impersonating a historic or philosophical figure or through a lively debate or some other role

playing experience. And they do the same thing and it's such a unique experience. That's where dynamic education really takes place.

Pogue: What is so unique about the community college?

Paul: I think that it does offer an opportunity to everyone to take the next step in life, to get ahead for the first couple of years at a low cost, to stay at home and not worry about all these stress factors that eighteen, nineteen year olds run into. Not only is adjusting to college hard enough, but moving away from home is the double whammy. And so we offer a solution to that—stay at home with that comfort zone, take your classes, learn how to study—so that when you go away in another couple of years and may have matured a little bit more, then you can handle that transition and do well and succeed at it. Not all of our students are eighteen, nineteen year olds. The average age when I was here was like thirty, thirty-one, but still I think we offer that comfortable existence where a person can come and study and not have to worry about other stress factors. And now that we're going online, and more and more online addressing the fact that some people just can't leave home for whatever reason and they can still pursue their education now.

Pogue: Going back to the fact that you gave a commencement address this year, what did you say in that?

Paul: I titled it "An Educated Person," and I talked about what my life was like, what my career choices were like, how I changed careers, how I found my way to Kankakee Community College, which I addressed in this interview. I talked about contributing to one's community, this community, making this place matter, getting involved in local history, and volunteering and recreational opportunities,

and other not-for-profits or helping out wherever help is needed—giving back to the community. That’s what’s important and I stressed those factors. I talked about some of the examples of our own local history that people just aren’t aware of-- that this was part of new France and later Louisiana, as a French colony-- that we were part of a Quebec province under the British in the 1770s-actually 1774-78. People just are not aware of the background, and I think it’s important that we stress that and that the college continues to do what it can to teach about these factors. And we need to teach the little ones too because as we teach them, they understand the value of this area in which they live, as well as the community college, as well as education in general, and that education opens oneself up to different opportunities and it allows you or compels you to be open-minded and tolerant and not so inflexible and rigid and dogmatic, that one pursue a philosophical attitude in life and that makes one a better person.

Pogue: Well when you started in 1972, could you have foreseen what you went through as an instructor at KCC?

Paul: No, I didn’t know what to think. (laughs) Like I said, from 1972 to 1976, when we had the Dr. Samlin regime, I didn’t really know where this was all going. But after that it was like the clouds went away, and the opportunity was here to create a situation that could be, not only memorable for ourselves, but for the Kankakee community as a whole. And by Kankakee, I mean the district of Kankakee Community College.

Pogue: Our final question, where do you see the college going over the next decade? You are in the History Department, so based on what you've seen so far, where do you think the college will be going?

Paul: Well, I put down a couple of notes on that. I think there will be more physical expansion—I talked to you about the northern extension up on Route 50, which is north of the City of Kankakee, or in the northern parts of the City of Kankakee. And I think likewise the programs will continue to expand and more courses will become transferable. I thought it was so interesting that I had majored in Latin American History and wanted to teach it for so many years, but wasn't allowed to because it wasn't a transferable level course. But in 1990, all of a sudden it became transferable. The state of the art technology will continue here. I think that the college will continue to be involved in the community as it is now and will continue to be networked with the community. And I think the current administration is doing all it can to make sure that networking continues.

Pogue: Our last question deals with the role of dual credit types of things. Were you involved at all with that?

Paul: I was a little bit, let's see—dual credit, refresh my memory on that.

Pogue: Well that would be where the students at the high school level can be taking credit in the high schools and have it transferred.

Paul: Right, right, and that's fine, that's wonderful. I think if a sixteen year old—I think they had to be sixteen years old, maybe it's gone lower now—but they could take college courses and it would be transferable, and that's fine.

Pogue: Well I want to thank you for sharing information with us about Kankakee Community College. Is there anything else that you would like to add before we conclude our interview?

Paul: I don't see anything on my note page though. I think we've covered it all.

Pogue: Well you've given us a great outline as to how KCC has moved from what, downtown Kankakee to a beautiful campus along the river, and how it has grown in its various building phases as well as its course development, and how it has served so many ages of people in the community.

Paul: Thank you very much, Phil.

(end of interview)