

## Interview with Roy Schilling

# IS-V-L-2007-016.1

Interview # 1: September 10, 2007

Interviewer: Chris Reynolds

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**

Reynolds: We are here today to do a life oral history on Roy Schilling. This is September 10, 2007. We are at the I.I.S. Studio in Springfield Illinois and I am Chris Reynolds. I am a volunteer for the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum and that's who we're doing this oral history for. Roy currently is a resident of Decatur, Illinois and we're going to talk about his entire life so why don't we just get started. Roy, tell me what you know about your family background, your parents, siblings, grandparents, any aunts and uncles and cousins you want to talk about. Give us the lay of the land of your family as we start.

Schilling: That's going to be a long story Chris.

Reynolds: Well, give me what you can.

Schilling: OK. I'd like to start with first my great-grandparents Schilling. My great-grandfather was named John, born April 13, 1808 in Wurttemberg, Germany. He died July 11, 1890 in Pike County, Ohio. He was married to Margaret Zwicker who was born November 25, 1819 also in Wurttemberg, Germany and she died at a very early age on April 25, 1867. The family came to America in 1825. They had six children and one of the reasons that great-grandfather John came was because at that time all seventeen year old youth were conscripted into the army, so many of them came to escape that.

Reynolds: What year would that have been?

Schilling: They came in 1825.

Reynolds: Okay, 1825.

Schilling: He was seventeen years old.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: Then the grandparents Schilling. My grandfather was named George; he was born on April 27, 1843 in Waverly, Ohio, which is Pike County, right on the Scioto River. Grandmother was Margaret Hamman. She was born on February 21, 1845, also in Pike County. She died on May 15, 1920. They were married on August 30, 1866 and had fourteen children.

Reynolds: In Ohio?

Schilling: In Ohio. Eleven of them grew to adulthood.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: That family, the Schilling family, came in 1825. Grandfather had a very bad misfortune. He was eighty-six years old and he was still working as a farm hand near Waverly, Pike [County], Ohio. He went to collect his money on December 19, 1928. Coming back to town he chose to walk the railroad tracks rather than the road and he was killed by a train.

Reynolds: Oh boy.

Schilling: So now we go to grandparents Van Fossan my mother's family. (turning pages) My great-grandfather, I'm sorry here (turning pages). My great-grandparents. Van Fossan named Zacchaues was born in Jackson County, Ohio in 1837. He died in 1914 in Redfield, Kansas. His wife was Rachel House born January 3, 1846 in Grandville, Ohio and she died in September 1933 in Morton, Illinois. They're both buried in the Elkhart Cemetery.

Reynolds: Oh, OK.

Schilling: Both my great-grandparents Van Fossan and grandparents Van Fossan are buried in the Elkhart Illinois cemetery.

Reynolds: So they moved to Illinois?

Schilling: They came first to Illinois and then they went to Kansas. Grandpa died in Kansas, but Grandma came back to Illinois and they had just four children. My grandfather was Wilson, one of the four children. There were two boys and two girls: Wilson, Linza, May and Mary. Grandpa Wilson Van Fossan was born November 23, 1869 in Jackson County, Ohio and he died on September 1, 1926 on a farm near Cornland, Illinois. We'll talk about that later because he lived on Governor Oglesby's farm at the time he died.

Reynolds: OK.

Schilling: There were six children in that family. My grandmother Van Fossan, Ida Edgell born January 3, 1869 in Middletown, Illinois. There were seven children in that family. She died October 7, 1957 in Peoria and again she is buried in Elkhart Cemetery. There were ten children. My mother Ethel was the oldest of ten.

Reynolds: Boy, when I did ask you to talk about all of (laughter) cousins and aunts and uncles...

Schilling: I had about forty cousins on my Schilling side and I counted them up the other day and I had something like thirty-five in the Van Fossan family, Van Fossan children, some of them I never did see. I did meet one when he was sixty-five years old. Now that brings me up to my parents.

Reynolds: Just, the occupation of the grandparents. Farmers for the most part?

Schilling: They were all farmers except the great-grandfather; he was a cooper. I didn't know what a cooper was but I asked today some people and they said they made barrels. Now what they made barrels for I don't know, but that was his occupation.

Reynolds: That was an essential commodity I would imagine.

Schilling: The rest of them were all farmers. My father was born on September 22, 1883 in Waverly, Ohio. He came to Illinois where he had two sisters, to Elkhart, Illinois, 1901, at age seventeen. He was a farmer and we can talk about that a little bit later but he was what you might call in that day a big farmer because he farmed four hundred eighty acres. Mother was born in Peoria, Illinois April 19, 1891, and they were married on February 26, 1913 here in Springfield by Judge Jenkins. They didn't have church weddings in those days. They just came down from Elkhart one day and met...

Reynolds: Why would they not have gotten married in Elkhart do you think? Just because a bigger church in Springfield?

Schilling: They had a minister in Elkhart but I don't know, they just chose to come to Springfield.

Reynolds: Maybe it was a little nicer place to have a wedding and a reception.

Schilling: They went to housekeeping on a very little farm out west of, east of Elkhart about four miles, a very small farm, timber land. They lived there one year and in 1914 they moved to a farm three and one-half miles west of Elkhart, an 80-acre farm, and that's where my twin brother Ray and I were born. I brought a picture. , let me go back, this is a picture of my grandmother Schilling. She was one of twelve and I knew her. That's the Hamman this is, family, that's my grandmother there. The picture...

Reynolds: What year would that picture have been taken?

Schilling: This picture was made in 1888 on their fiftieth wedding anniversary. Most of them lived to be in their eighties. Then this is a picture...

Reynolds: It's a family tradition to live a long time.

Schilling: Yes. I don't have a picture of my great-grandparents Schilling, but this is a picture of my grandparents Schilling, this one here and that's my father there. Two of the brothers weren't there. I won't go into the reason they weren't there, but there was a reason (laughter). And then this is my own family.

Reynolds: Okay, this is your mom and dad and the four sons.

Schilling: Mom and dad and my three brothers with me. Then this was taken in 1918; Ray and I were on the horses out on the farm.

Reynolds: And you were a twin?

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: But your twin brother is no longer alive as I recall?

Schilling: That's a long story, but my twin brother was a great fellow. He went to Blackburn College after he finished high-school in Elkhart and his health was not good. We had scarlet fever.

Reynolds: Both of you had scarlet fever as children?

Schilling: Yeah. We had scarlet fever twice and following that we had rheumatic fever. So at age sixteen I was so ill with rheumatic fever that I spent the entire summer in bed. Ray's case of scarlet fever was not that bad so he kept going and he kept going and he kept going and he farmed and had a big dairy. But finally he had permanent damage and died at age thirty-four. He died, by the way, in Springfield. He and his wife.

Reynolds: Was he living in Springfield?

Schilling: No. They were living in Lincoln and he and his wife and seven month old baby boy were visiting a friend named Copper here in Springfield. He sold New York Life insurance, he farmed, he had this big dairy in Elkhart for a number of years but his last job was Director, Membership Chairman of the Logan County Farm Bureau.

Reynolds: We're talking about your twin brother right now?

Schilling: He supervised all of the 4-H clubs in Logan County. He died suddenly October 16, 1948.

Reynolds: How about your other siblings? Are they all right?

Schilling: They both farmed.

Reynolds: Are they both alive?

Schilling: Harold was born on September 21, 1917. We moved from the eighty acre farm to a one hundred sixty acre farm owned by a Mr. Patrick Bohan that was four and one-half miles west of Elkhart. Baby brother Clarence Junior was born November 4, 1919 and he is now deceased, dying April 4, 1994. My brother Harold will be observing his 90th birthday next Sunday.

Reynolds: Wow. I met Harold and he looks to be in very good health.

Schilling: When we moved to the farm east of Elkhart on March 1, 1921 – four hundred eighty acres – we did all the farming with horses. We had eighteen head of horses, two riding ponies and a Shetland pony.

Reynolds: Your father was a farmer pretty much his entire life?

Schilling: All of his life. He first operated a farm near Middletown, Illinois and then he came to Elkhart. So we lived on that farm from March 1, 1921. My parents lived there 25 years. Now this is the bottom of Elkhart Hill, a mile and one quarter east of Elkhart. We had eighty acres of timber land. A four hundred eighty acre farm in those days was a big farm and to do it all with horses was something else.

Reynolds: Did you hire people to help you with it?

Schilling: We usually had a hired man and we had a hired girl because Mother was busy you know, caring for the family.

Reynolds: Keeping track of the kids and doing the home front, huh?

Schilling: Harold has been going to that farm since 1921. My parents lived on that farm. It was owned by Mrs. Charlotte Barnes who was a sister of Mrs. Oglesby; she owned the farm and my parents lived there twenty-five years. My brother Harold lived there until 1974 and then his son Robert lived there and now his grandson Kevin lives there. So we've been on that farm since March 1, 1921,

Reynolds: You were farming it for the Barnes family?

Schilling: The farm was owned by Mrs. Charlotte Barnes, the wife of Dr. Barnes who was the founder of Decatur Memorial Hospital.

Reynolds: And the connection to the Oglesby family – I know we’ll get back to this in a later interview – but what’s the connection to the Barnes, through marriage they’re connected?

Schilling: Mrs. Oglesby was the oldest of the John D. Gillett girls and Mrs. Barnes was the youngest one. They had big farm land.

Reynolds: OK, I think we kind of got all of your family although we didn’t get into the aunts and uncles and the cousins, but we’d be here a long time if we tried to get into that (laughter). But that’s fine.

Schilling: They were all wonderful uncles and aunts—twenty of them.

Reynolds: Let’s just kind of talk about your childhood, memories of childhood, you know. Sounds like you lived in maybe one place, but talk about the churches and the people that you knew and maybe your elementary school experiences, friends, the kind of things you did in Elkhart, that kind of thing. I’m assuming you lived on a farm. Did I get that right?

Schilling: On a farm, three and one-half miles west of Elkhart and one and a quarter miles east of Elkhart.

Reynolds: And you lived in Elkhart as a child until about when? Till you went away to college?

Schilling: I lived on the farm with my parents, in and out different times, until 1943. I was twenty nine years old.

Reynolds: So you were there for nearly thirty years.

Schilling: I was twenty nine years old when I left home. Never, did I ever pay any board and room.

Reynolds: That’s a good deal.

Schilling: Going back to my first year of school, I need a drink of water (laughter).

Reynolds: Do you have that glass down there?

Schilling: Anyway, Ray and I were born June 12, 1914.

Reynolds: I hate to drink this in front of you...

Schilling: (Laughter). We needed to go to school in September 1920. Well, Maple Grove School, which is twenty miles north of Springfield, on the Menard and Logan County line, that’s where we were supposed to go to school, but when my parents found out that we were moving from west of town to east of town in March the first, they said ‘We’re not going to send those

boys to a country school and have them change to a village school'. So we didn't get to go and I was very upset because my parents were very much interested in education; they taught us how to – we knew the days of the week, the months of the year and we could write our numbers to one hundred. We didn't read. We could tell time. So we were very fortunate boys.

Reynolds: They kind of home schooled to an extent.

Schilling: Well, they were both interested in education. My father went – I think he told me one time – he went ten years to school without missing a single day, but my mother only finished eighth grade. By the way, she lived near Williamsville and went to the constant rural school. We didn't get to start to school until September of 1921 in Elkhart. I can remember the first day of school. In teaching classes at Millikin University I often asked my students, "Do you remember your first day of school?" I could not believe that many didn't. I remember my first day of school as if it were yesterday. I can still see some of my classmates.

Reynolds: Was it a good day or a bad day? (Laughter)

Schilling: I couldn't wait to go. My father took my twin brother Ray and me in a buggy and a horse named Sport to town. He did not know we were not going to be there all day, so he just went home. Well, we had our little bucket lunches and after we got our assignment of school supplies and books, school was dismissed about nine-thirty. So we were determined to eat our lunches so we went out under the tree and sat down and ate our lunches. Walked home, a mile and a quarter; on the way home a neighbor boy who was in high school and a friend of his picked us up – his name was Walter Lee – and they asked us a question which I could not answer and the question was "Did you whisper?". I never heard of the word, I did not know what 'whisper' meant. (Reynolds laughing). So anyway we walked to school, we rode our ponies...

Reynolds: You were going to learn to whisper in school?

Schilling: I learned a lot about that. We walked to school, we rode the ponies, we drove the ponies to buggy, we went in bad weather, my father would take us in the lumber wagon and it was... we had a good life.

Reynolds: Was this a multiple room school or what was the...

Schilling: My first two years were spent in the old building which sat in a pasture across the street from the main part of town. The pasture is owned by John Gillett and his family. The first building we went to was a big tall brick building built in 1865.

Reynolds: Did they have everyone separated by grades?

Schilling: They had one room downstairs for first and second grades and then we had a third, fourth and fifth grade downstairs. Seventh and eighth grades were upstairs. In 1923, they built the school which stands today, and that's where we went for the rest of our elementary school. And then the high school: we had a high school organized in 1920 and so the high school was built in, I think 1924, might have been 1923, and that's where we went to high school.

Reynolds: Do you remember any of the teachers that stood out in your mind during those years?

Schilling: Every one of them.

Reynolds: You don't want to slight any of them by selecting a particular teacher.

Schilling: You know, they each had their own good things about them. I didn't have a single bad teacher

Reynolds: How many teachers in elementary school did you have over the whole course of the eight years or nine years?

Schilling: I had Miss Ellen Hickey in first, second grade and she was a wonderful teacher. I had Miss Agnes Hickey in third grade. I had Miss Ruth Sweet in fourth, fifth grade; she is the one that made me want to be a teacher.

Reynolds: That's what I was kind of getting at; since you ended up an educator, there must have been one that really impressed you.

Schilling: Well, why Miss Sweet? She did things other than just teach us writing and arithmetic. At lunch times we'd take our bucket and sack lunches and go up to the hill where the Hiram Keays home was and we would study the flowers and the birds and the trees and have our picnic.

Reynolds: Just briefly, we're going to talk about the Gillett family probably later, but just a brief aside of who the Gillett was.

Schilling: John Dean Gillett came from, I think, New York State in about 1840 sometime and became a very prosperous cattle raiser. He raised big herds of cattle. So he was the first cattle breeder in the United States that would ship cattle to Europe. At the big cattle show in Chicago, he was named the Cattle King of America.

Reynolds: This would have been late 1800's?

Schilling: About 1885.

Reynolds: He lived at the top of the hill in Elkhart and obviously owned a lot of the...



Schilling: I have a picture of that. No, I don't have a picture of that.

Reynolds: We'll talk about Elkhart a little later, but since you mentioned him, we'll let people know who he was.

Schilling: Grade school was a real blessing. We were always glad when the weather got bad because if the weather was too bad to go home, well, we rented a barn in town to put our ponies in the barn because my two brothers rode the Shetland pony and Ray and I rode the Indian pony. But right across the street from the grade school was Uncle Linza and Aunt Mary Van Fossan. Uncle Linza was my mother's uncle and Aunt Mary was my father's sister and I tell this story; maybe I can tell it right. So that's where my parents met. Mother wanted to visit her Uncle and Aunt and Dad wanted to visit sister and brother-in-law, so when they got married – I hope I can tell this right – Dad became a nephew to his sister and my mother became a sister-in-law to her uncle. (Laughter) Follow that? And they were wonderful. So in bad weather we got to stay all night with them.

Reynolds: Do you remember any big events in town during your elementary years? Any cultural or social events that maybe occurred in Elkhart?

Schilling: I'd like to mention something about what I did in school first.

Reynolds: Oh, absolutely.

Schilling: Of course we had good teachers and I did oratory and was successful in being able to represent Elkhart High School in oratory.

Reynolds: This would have been in high school probably?

Schilling: Yes, in high school. We also participated in school plays. One of our great teachers – and we had great ones – one of them was Julia Bock Harwood Miller. She became a world traveler and lecturer and we had a great experience with her.

Reynolds: Wow. What was her expertise in or why did she become famous?

Schilling: I think mainly because after she taught she decided she just wanted to be a traveler. She had an agent and she spoke to the congressmen and the state legislatures and school students.

Reynolds: Did she have a cause that she was speaking about or...?

Schilling: Just her travels.

Reynolds: Her travels, OK.

Schilling: You see in those days, people didn't travel like they do today.

Reynolds: So, she would travel and lecture about the places she'd been to?

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Anything else about your school experience you want to remember or want to talk about? You were on the debate club?

Schilling: No, it was just oratory.

Reynolds: Oratory, it was called? You said you did some plays? Do you remember any of the plays that you were in?

Schilling: One of them was called *Seventeen*. The other was called *Minick*, about an old man who had some problems; my Aunt Mary didn't like it because she thought it was not being very respectful to old people. (Laughter).

Reynolds: Oh boy.

Schilling: We had a terrible tragedy in our senior year. Our class was small. On December 5, 1932, two of our senior classmates, Leland Todd and Emma Arve, were killed in a car/train crash in Elkhart. It was a sad time.

Reynolds: A car/train? A car was hit by a train?

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Which reminds me, did you sense the Depression was going on? Had it affected everybody in Elkhart in some way or another or...and how did it affect you since you would have been right at the heart of the Depression right then?

Schilling: You know, we usually had a homecoming in December but because of the tragic death of our two classmates the homecoming was postponed until March 4, 1933. That was the day that President Roosevelt closed all of the banks. So that night at the oyster stew supper nobody had any money, none.

Reynolds: How many banks were there in Elkhart at that point?

Schilling: We had one. It never did re-open.

Reynolds: Never did re-open. Was there a run on the bank in Elkhart do you recall?

Schilling: One man lost twenty-eight thousand dollars. Michael Ryan was his name.

Reynolds: I'm guessing that the Gilletts and the Barnes' and other families probably had their money somewhere else or?

Schilling: They did very well because –I don't like to say these stories – but what they did, one of the Gillett girls would loan money to the farmers and they couldn't pay it back so she'd foreclose and take the farm. And that was hard. In a sense, we didn't know we had a Depression because we grew our own food; on the farm we had all of our vegetables and potatoes and hogs and sheep and cattle. We would butcher a hog. We'd butcher a calf in November and that would last until February and then in February we'd butcher four hogs. Then we had 500 chickens and chickens would come due to eat about August when we had corn on the cob and fresh tomatoes (Laughter).

Reynolds: So you don't remember it ever really affecting the financial status of your family?

Schilling: Well, in 1933 was when the big Depression hit us. I remember Father had finished harvesting the wheat crop and he was afraid that the wheat crop was going to be lost because of the elevator failure. I remember saying, "You know, if both Ray and I can't go to school, I'm going to be the one to go," because I felt like my health was not too good. So I went to Illinois State Normal University [now ISU] in 1933 and Ray went to Carlinsville, Blackburn College. But knowing how hard it was for my parents to provide for us, I kept a very accurate record of my expenses and just recently I threw away the little notebook I kept. My two years at I.S.U., Illinois State University then, cost less than \$600.00.

Reynolds: We'll get back to your college years. Let's talk about Elkhart a little bit and the history of Elkhart. I know you've become sort of a student of the history of Elkhart.

Schilling: Well, going back to my pre-school days, we were enrolled in the cradle roll department of the church, Elkhart Christian Church. Church was very important to us. We very seldom did not attend church. When we lived west of Elkhart, it was four miles and we didn't always get there but when we moved east of town we could walk to get there. So we were very regular in attending church. The Fourth of July was a big event. We always had a big celebration on the Fourth of July. Horse races and horseshoe pitching and picnics, it was great. We don't do that anymore.

Reynolds: That doesn't happen much anymore. Did Elkhart celebrate its founding fathers in any way over the years?

Schilling: In 1955 we had a big celebration on the hill. It was a BIG celebration. In 2005 we celebrated our one hundred fiftieth anniversary...

Reynolds: Yeah, I guess it would be centennial or was it a bi-centennial?

Schilling: Let's see, 2005, I have to stop and think... It was founded in 1855, it would be a hundred fifty years.

Reynolds: A hundred and fifty years.

Schilling: We had a big celebration then and I didn't bring the picture but two women and I served as a panel talking about our recollections of our childhood. We talked. I was ninety-two, and one was ninety one and one was ninety-two: Alice McCue and Margaret Tierny Lanterman.

Reynolds: Did you go to school with both of them?

Schilling: No. With Alice I did, yes, but Margaret went to Mt. Pulaski. So anyway, we talked about our experiences. I asked my brother Harold what he thought, and he said, "Well, people said they found it very interesting; some of them thought it was a little bit too long and others thought maybe they could listen to it all night." (Laughter). One of the experiences I told there: In 1922 or 1923, we had this eighty acres of timber on this four hundred eighty acre farm, and they cut out eighty walnut trees and sold them for \$100.00 per tree. We had a saw mill on the land, the Barnes family did, and they cut down all those ash trees, elms, oak and walnut; that saw mill was on the farm for maybe three or four years. In December of 1928, they had forty thousand square feet of lumber stacked. We had hunters all the time, hunting, and one night, for some reason, the lumber yard caught fire and burned all of it. It was a big loss.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: Uninsured.

Reynolds: And there probably was not much they could do about the fire; they kind of had to let it burn?

Schilling: The well was three hundred feet away from there and all you could do was carry a bucket. No, we just stood there and watched it burn.

Reynolds: Did several businesses go out of business in Elkhart during the Depression or, and in terms of World War II, were there a lot of men from Elkhart that ended up going to war?

Schilling: We had a large number in World War I and we had a large number in World War II, big number. In World War I we lost three local citizens and in World War II, I think as I remember, maybe two or three, yeah, about three or four. Wilbur Mann was one of them. Considering all the numbers that went, it was not too bad.

Reynolds: Now you probably, because of health reasons, were not able to participate in the war?

Schilling: I was teaching sixth grade at Jefferson School in Lincoln in September 1940, and my number was drawn for the draft, I was number nine in the

county. So I had to be examined for the Army, the day after Thanksgiving 1940. An Army doctor examined me; because of my health reasons, he said, "We don't need your kind". So he marked me 4F. I was disappointed, because I wanted to go.

Reynolds: Well, you served the country as a teacher too.

Schilling: Later I tried to enlist and they wouldn't take me. The only one of us four boys that went was Harold; he spent time in Florida and at Gander Field, Newfoundland. [Royal Canadian Air Force Station]

Reynolds: Any other big business that you can think of, that didn't make it through the Depression in Elkhart? You said the grain elevator was close to bankruptcy?

Schilling: No, it made it. To my knowledge, there was not a one of them closed. The grocery store stayed open, the hardware stayed open, the restaurant stayed open. They were fortunate. You see, it was a very, you might say a very prosperous community and many of the farmers were from Ireland, first time people from Ireland.

Reynolds: Primarily a farming community? There wasn't a lot of just wage and salary people?

Schilling: Mostly farming. Farming, that was a big business.

Reynolds: Did a lot of people commute to Springfield for work, in Elkhart?

Schilling: Some of them did yes.

Reynolds: But very few probably.

Schilling: I remember, a man named John Merrit worked in Springfield at the Chicago Motor Club. Yes, they did.

Reynolds: Now you said at one point there was a train that went, sort of almost a commuter train that went from Elkhart to Springfield.

Schilling: We had what we called The Illinois Traction System. [known locally as the Interurban] The Illinois Traction System: I've been reading a lot of history on that. The Illinois Traction System was founded by William B. McKinley, born in Petersburg, Illinois and he had a big system. The Illinois Traction System was electric. It ran from Bloomington to St. Louis, Peoria, Champaign, Indianapolis and they ran almost every hour. It was one single car. When we wanted to go to the doctor in Williamsville we rode the Interurban.

Reynolds: It was an independent company apart from the big railroads companies?

Schilling: Completely. I think he was the sole owner. He later became a United States Senator. I remember school was dismissed one afternoon for children to see him.

Reynolds: What was his name again?

Schilling: William B. McKinley. He was born in Petersburg, Illinois. He came to town once, he was campaigning, he was senator from 1920 to 1926, and he came to Elkhart, I guess to campaign, it was after school and we went down to the main street of town and I remember him standing there talking to us and the only thing I can remember him saying was "In Washington, D.C., I'm one of ninety-six people," the number in the U. S. Senate at that time.

Reynolds: Right. Right. So people, every hour on the hour, could go to Springfield, for shopping.

Schilling: I'd ride my Shetland pony, Beauty, to town and tie him up behind the grocery store, get on the Interurban and go to Williamsville to see Dr. Shearl, have my glasses checked and go back all in one afternoon, about maybe two hours. I remember the fare was something like fifteen or twenty cents.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: And by the way, one of the motormen on that traction system was Jasper Oglesby, the governor's son.

Reynolds: Oh, yeah. We'll probably talk about him in later parts of the interview. Are there other towns around Elkhart that have a strong connection? I know Mt. Pulaski is where Elkhart children go to school now. Was there always a strong attachment with, I know Cornland is another place I've heard you talk about.

Schilling: See, Elkhart Township was a township and a half and Cornland was a part of it.

Reynolds: Okay. So you were in the same township? So you shared some governmental services and units.

Schilling: My father served first of all as the Town Clerk of the Elkhart Township and then he served as the Supervisor.

Reynolds: Oh, okay. Lot of attachments to Mt. Pulaski? Or, was there a rivalry between the towns?

Schilling: You bet, you bet there was, but more so with Williamsville.

Reynolds: Oh, with Williamsville.

Schilling: The president of the school board in Williamsville was Dr. Shearl. I can tell you a long story about that. He was our doctor, and G. Ernest Smith was our high school principal. We had the scarlet fever when we were freshmen in high school and we were quarantined six weeks. Well, Dr. Shearl thought we didn't need to be in that long so he let us go out in about, I think, five weeks. We got back to school one Monday morning and Mr. Smith said: Well, we just got this place cleaned up from you and now you're back. So he called the state health department, the state health department called Dr. Shearl and Dr. Shearl sent us back home.

Reynolds: Oh, boy. Oh, boy. Anything else you want to say about Elkhart and it's kind of importance to you?

Schilling: The way I talk about Elkhart today, people get tired of hearing it. I'll say: "Do you know where Elkhart is?" "Yes" they say, "Elkhart, Indiana." I'll say: No, Elkhart, Illinois." "Well, where is that?"—people in Decatur. I'd say, "Do you know where Mt. Pulaski is? It's thirty two miles west of Decatur, west of Elkhart; it's about eighteen miles north of Springfield and eleven miles south of Lincoln. It's the center of the universe to me."

Reynolds: Yes. There you go. If you drive up I-55, you see that hill; it's a very prominent feature; of the whole drive to Chicago that's the only hill I think that you see almost.

Schilling: L.B. Stringer, the author of the Logan County history book of 1911, described the Elkhart Hill. It's a beautiful description.

Reynolds: And, of course, later we're going to talk about those sort of famous families and the stories (both talking)

Schilling: Well, you saw the home when we were there a couple of weeks ago.

Reynolds: Yes, I very much enjoyed the tour you gave me on it. Let's talk about your college years. Twenty-nine years in Elkhart, you moved to Normal, sounds like to go to college or, pick it up from there.

Schilling: Well, in 1933 my twin brother Ray and I graduated from Elkhart High School. He went to Blackburn College in Carlinville and had to give it up after a year and one-half because of his health. I went up to ISU [Then ISNU, Illinois State Normal University.] and I did two years in upper elementary school studies. I did my student teaching in sixth grade at Illinois Sailor and Soldier Children's school [Illinois Soldiers' and Sailors' Children's School]. Had wonderful, wonderful teachers.

Reynolds: Where was that at now?

Schilling: Illinois State Normal University.

Reynolds: Oh, up in their lab school. Or what we call a lab school now.

Schilling: Yes, they had two lab schools. They had Metcalf Grade School on the campus and then they had the Illinois Sailor and Soldiers' Children's School out north of town in Normal.

Reynolds: Oh, okay.

Schilling: That's where I did my student teaching. I was very fortunate. Not everybody got to attend there.

Reynolds: How many students were going to ISU in 1933 to 1935?

Schilling: Fifteen hundred.

Reynolds: Fifteen hundred. Wow. I think it calls itself the first public land grant university in Illinois.

Schilling: It was the first teacher's college west of the Alleghenies. 1857.

Reynolds: Primarily teachers.

Schilling: We're celebrating our one hundred and fiftieth anniversary this year.

Reynolds: Right. And when you went there everybody that was going there was primarily becoming educators, right?

Schilling: All of them. All of them. Just teachers only.

Reynolds: The whole university was devoted to that.

Schilling: There were poor people. Depression. I knew only one person that had a car. I finished two years and I couldn't believe what happened. I took a job teaching at Maple Grove School, which was the school I was supposed to go to when I was in the first grade.

Reynolds: Oh, really.

Schilling: Maple Grove School was located on the Menard and Logan County line. I had to have my license granted in Menard County, but the curriculum was under Logan County. So I had to have two certificates. That year was 1935, September the 2<sup>nd</sup>. In 1868 the building had been built. I had eighteen children including seven first graders, and never had a better year.



Reynolds: Now, it took you two years to get through ISU.

Schilling: It's just two years and you got a teaching certificate.

Reynolds: Okay. And you had to do some student teaching to get certified?

Schilling: Yes, I did twelve weeks of student teaching.

Reynolds: Okay, right after your two years.

Schilling: I did twelve weeks of student teaching in sixth grade.

Reynolds: Was that considered a bachelor's degree?

Schilling: No it's just called a teaching diploma.

Reynolds: Okay. Okay.

Schilling: I got six hundred and forty dollars for that first year of teaching.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: There were seven first graders. I taught them all how to read. One little boy in first grade read twenty three books.

Reynolds: Six hundred and forty dollars you're talking about...

Schilling: Six hundred and forty dollars a year!

Reynolds: Okay, an annual salary. I just wanted to make sure. (both laugh)

Schilling: And I got along. I picked up the Brennan children, two of them, and the Morgan children, three of them. One morning in January, we had this terrible, terrible cold day; it was the coldest winter on record.

Reynolds: What year are we talking about here?

Schilling: 1936.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: I had those five children with me at seven o'clock in the morning at the school house. I went to pick up my coal and cob buckets to build a fire. Inside the building the temperature said two degrees below zero. So the three boys across the road and Ralph Drake, the eighth grade boy, walked and one little boy in the first grade was brought by horseback. Very interesting. Just last Thursday, I went to Elkhart for the eighty-fifth birthday observance of a friend of mine and there I met my eighth-grade boy, Ralph Drake.

Reynolds: Oh, you're kidding.

Schilling: I'd not seen him before. He's eighty-seven years old now.

Reynolds: Wow. And he went to this school?

Schilling: He was my eighth grade boy.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: My oldest student.

Reynolds: How many kids were in that school totally?

Schilling: Eighteen.

Reynolds: Eighteen, okay.

Schilling: Had all the grades except second. So I made cocoa for them and sometimes their parents would send soup and we'd have soup.

Reynolds: Right. So how long did you teach at that school?

Schilling: One year.

Reynolds: One year. And then you moved on to...

Schilling: And how fortunate I was. Not wishing to brag, but it seemed like I got along pretty well. And my county superintendent, E.H. Lukenbill, who knew me from first grade on, he recommended that I go to be the principal and sixth, seventh and eighth grade teacher at Emden, Illinois, which is north of Lincoln.

Reynolds: After just a year of teaching.

Schilling: One year. I went there, and what an experience. I didn't have to build fires, I didn't have to drive in bad weather, I stayed with a family named Whitaker. First of all, it was August 11, 1936, and Mr. Lukenbill called me at home and said he had to see me. I'd been to his office on Saturday. I said, "Can't you tell me on the phone what you want?" He said, Oh, no, I can't do that." Well, I didn't want to go because the next day my mother and my twin brother Ray were going to go to Ohio and we were busy. So I went up and he said, "You're hired, you got the job, but they need to look at you. So you need to go up there and see them." So I said, "well, I have to go home and put a suit on." He said, "Oh, no. Just go the way you are." But I went home and put on a suit. My brother Ray drove me; we knew how to get there. When we got there we met Toby Rademaker, who was one of the directors, and we met the school board members, Bill Hoffman

who was the railroad agent, but the banker, Cyrus McCormick, was not available until six o'clock. So we had to wait until six o'clock to see them all. By that time I had a terrible headache so we drove out north of Emden and they were building Route 136. We went back in and I stood in the center of this hardware store and Mr McCormick said, "Lukenbill wants you to be the principal and we take his word for it and we're going to pay you eighty dollars a month. We expect you to be in the building from eight o'clock on Monday morning until four o'clock on Friday afternoon and what you do between four o'clock and eight o'clock is none of our business."

Reynolds: That's quite a raise from the six hundred and forty annual, huh?

Schilling: And he said, "If we like what you're doing we'll hire you and raise you each year until you get to the top." I had to question, "What's the top?" (both chuckle) Well, we got plenty of money. So the next year I got a \$7.50 raise a month and the next year I got \$5.50 a month, and the next year I got \$2.50. In 1939 the teacher retirement system was changed, so we had to take a percentage off my salary. Up until that time we only paid into the pension two dollars a month for five months and next month, for five years, four dollars for five months next year.

Reynolds: Has Social Security kicked in by this time?

Schilling: No.

Reynolds: You didn't have to contribute.

Schilling: No. Anyway, we were guaranteed a pension of four hundred dollars a year after twenty-five years. But anyway, I was there four years and had a wonderful experience. It's where I met my wife, Rachel Rogers.

Reynolds: Now tell me where that is exactly from where you were.

Schilling: Emden, it's just a spur off of 121, eleven miles north of Lincoln.

Reynolds: Okay. So we still kind of in Logan County.

Schilling: Yes, it is Logan County, just four miles south of Delavan, Illinois.

Reynolds: So your first two jobs were in Logan County then.

Schilling: Well even in Lincoln I taught; I taught in Lincoln, too.

Reynolds: Okay. So you were there for four years and you were the principal and a teacher.

Schilling: Yes. We had three rooms. Miss Ruth Zimmer taught first and second grade. Etta McCormick taught third, fourth and fifth, and I taught sixth, seventh and eighth. The parents were absolutely wonderful. I keep in touch with those boys yet, some of them: Thomas Konmick, Darrell Klint and Dean Rademaker..

Reynolds: Do you?

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: And how big of a school was this?

Schilling: I had twenty-five in classes, so we had fewer than one-hundred.

Reynolds: And you taught at the elementary school level for the most part.

Schilling: I was there four years. And again, I say the people were just unbelievably supportive. We had a basketball team, we had children in a chorus.

Reynolds: Did you buy a house there? Or did you just rent?

Schilling: No, I wasn't even married then. I went there when I was twenty-two years old and I was there for four years.

Reynolds: Okay. So you were very young. And you were principal of the school.

Schilling: Yes. I got a picture here. Let's see if I can find it. Right here we are.

Reynolds: Yeah, Okay. This is a gathering of principals from Logan County. And there's a picture of your children.

Schilling: I still keep in touch with that lady high school teacher. She lives in Minnesota.

Reynolds: Oh, yeah.

Schilling: We're both in our twenties.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: And this, of course, is my twin brother, Ray.

Reynolds: Right. Right.

Schilling: So anyway, I was in Mr. Lukenbill's office in the court house in Lincoln one day and I said, "Mr. Lukenbill, do you think there might be a job for me in Lincoln next year?" He turned to me and said, I'll call up Nick – Mr. Nichols is superintendent. He called up Mr. Nichols; Mr. Nichols had an office right across, next to the railroad station. He said, "Send him

over.” I went over and signed the contract. I taught sixth grade in Jefferson School, which is on Fifth Street – forty four children. I taught there two years, had a wonderful experience. The third year I was principal and taught sixth grade in Monroe school.

Reynolds: In Lincoln.

Schilling: I had forty-four children. And I decided that, well, forty-four children was just too much.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: But in the meantime I had been going to summer school at ISNU, Illinois State Normal University. I went one summer six weeks in Macomb. I did twelve weeks in University of Wyoming. In 1939 I went to Illinois State Normal University and got my Bachelor’s Degree.

Reynolds: Bachelor’s degree, okay. While you were teaching.

Schilling: 1940, right. Then I went to school at Teacher’s College at Columbia University in New York.

Reynolds: Oh, in New York. What years were those?

Schilling: 1941, ‘42 and ‘43.

Reynolds: So did you have to quit your job in Lincoln to do that?

Schilling: No, I would go to summer school.

Reynolds: Oh, you went to summer school there; spent your summer in New York City.

Schilling: I would leave in June and I’d get back in August. I kept very accurate count of my expenses there. A semester hour cost \$12.50. It cost \$96.00 dollars for the summer. I didn’t have a lot of money. I only made \$1100, \$1200 each year. So I had to be real careful with money. I kept records and have the record; I got my master’s degree for something less than a thousand dollars. So in August of 1943, I got my master’s degree...

Reynolds: From New York?

Schilling: Yes. From New York Teacher’s College. Fortunately, I was recommended to take the position to fill in a year’s leave of absence at Eastern Oregon University in La Grande, Oregon. I didn’t want to leave Lincoln, but anyway I did. And so on September the first, 1943, I found myself in La Grande, Oregon.

Reynolds: Okay. So how many years were you both a teacher and principal in Lincoln?

Schilling: I was a teacher two years at Jefferson School, and then I was principal and teacher at Monroe for one year. Three years all together.

Reynolds: Just to get back to those class sizes. Forty-four. Nowadays we think thirty is horrible. Why were there such classes because of financial?

Schilling: Mr. Nichols was a wonderful superintendent and then he left and Mr. Harry Augsberger became superintendent. I said to him one time, "Mr. Augsberger, the school policy says that you shouldn't have more than forty." He said, "Well, they're here; what are you going to do with them?"

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: So I just took them.

Reynolds: There were no union contracts to restrict this kind of thing back in those days?

Schilling: When we applied for a job, we never asked what the salaries were; they just told you. I opened up a hot lunch program and operated that. I'd get at school at seven o'clock in the morning and leave at six. Work until midnight.

Reynolds: When you lived in Lincoln did you buy a home?

Schilling: No. I stayed with my parents in Elkhart.. I was eleven miles from home. Now today I'd drive it, but in those days that was a long way. I boarded with a family at Emden, two families. Then in Lincoln, I just drove back and forth to Elkhart, living with my parents. In September 1943 I was out in Oregon and I was supervising student teachers in the training school and teaching sixth and seventh grade children. It was a marvelous experience.

Reynolds: Now before we leave Lincoln, anything more you want to say about your years in Lincoln and your experience of living in that community or at least serving in that community?

Schilling: You know, about the only thing I did was teach school.

Reynolds: Yeah. And you commuted back and forth.

Schilling: That's all I had time to do. Oh, I went to the movie once in a while. I met Rachel in Emden in 1937 and seven years later we got married.

Reynolds: Oh, okay. So seven years later, but you met her there. Was she a teacher there?

Schilling: No. She lived on a farm south of Delavan with her parents. Well, her father had died very young and she lived with her mother, two brothers and a sister and so we dated. She went into nurses training at the Mennonite School of Nursing in Bloomington in 1939. She graduated from the Mennonite School of Nursing in 1942. But I had no money and so our courtship was mostly by letters.

Reynolds: Well, why don't we pick up on that and then we'll pick back up on your career as you moved into Oregon. So you met your wife here in Illinois. When did you finally get married after your seven years of courtship?

Schilling: Well, I met her in January of 1937 and so say we dated not very frequently because I didn't have any money. She went in to nurses training.

Reynolds: Where did she go to nursing training?

Schilling: She went to nurses training at the Mennonite School of Nursing in Bloomington, which is now part of the Illinois State University. In 1942 she had finished her nursing degree. She took a job first of all as supervisor in the Mennonite Hospital and then she worked as a surgical nurse with Dr. Gailey at the Gailey Eye Clinic, which was a big experience. So then I finished my Master's degree in '43 and she'd been working a year, so I thought it was time to get married. We planned to get married in 1944, but because I went to Oregon, I said, No, I 'm not going to wait for then. I came back home and got married on December 30, 1943 in Emden.

Reynolds: Then you moved to Oregon?

Schilling: Yes. We lived in Oregon.

Reynolds: And the job in Oregon that brought you out there was a job at a university or college?

Schilling: Eastern Oregon College of Education; now it's Eastern Oregon University.

Reynolds: Now how did you get hooked up with that job, or how did you hear about it?

Schilling: The placement bureau at Teacher's College, Columbia University recommended me.

Reynolds: New York, where you got your masters degree?

Schilling: It was to fill a year's leave of absence, with a possibility to stay. And I could have stayed. It was a beautiful experience in that beautiful Grande Ronde valley surrounded by mountains. That summer before we came back home to Illinois, we went with our minister and his wife up in the mountains for a week's camping trip. People say: Why did you come back? Well, in the meantime my mother-in-law had developed cancer and my twin brother, Ray, was not well. I didn't think we had any business being out there so far from our homes.

Reynolds: Well, I'm kind of surprised that you decided to take a risk and go all the way out to Oregon; that's a big move. Remind me again. Did you get married before you made that decision or after?

Schilling: No. I went in September 1943 and came back and got married December 30, 1943.

Reynolds: Okay. So you were just out there for...

Schilling: I was out there for a year. Came back in July of '44. I wanted to be back home. I'm a home boy. So we came back and spent time with our parents. And in August, I didn't have any job. And in August I came down to Springfield for an interview. I met with Dr. Fildes, Superintendent of Schools here in Springfield, and he offered me a position in a school teaching eighth grade for \$1900 a year.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: That was pretty good money.

Reynolds: Was that the typical way people got a job in the educational system was to come to Springfield and talk to the...

Schilling: State Superintendent of Schools; that's a long story itself. State Superintendent of Schools was elected at that time.

Reynolds: Yeah. I think right up until the maybe the 60's or something like that.

Schilling: Mr. Francis Blair was the State Superintendent for many, many years. Right now I've forgotten the other superintendent. No, the Illinois Education Association which has an office here on Edwards Street, that office recommended me for this job in Springfield.

Reynolds: That's a teacher's union, right?

Schilling: It's a teacher placement bureau.

Reynolds: Okay.



Schilling: So I came down at the recommendation of the Illinois Education Office and was offered a job. Just as I was ready to leave home to come to Springfield I had a call from the president of Pioneer State Teachers College in Wisconsin, at Platteville, Wisconsin. The president there offered me a job teaching sixth, seventh and eighth grade science and math and supervising student teachers for \$2500. So I said to Dr. Fildes, "You know, just before I came down for an interview I had this call from Wisconsin; and I'd like to have until Monday to make a decision what to do. I've been offered twenty-five hundred, you're offering me nineteen hundred." He said, "Young man, if you say you're going to be in that building on September second, I expect you to be there." I said, "Dr. Fildes, I'm an honest man; give me until Monday to make a decision. So I went to Wisconsin.

Reynolds: So you went to Wisconsin. You went for the money for once, huh?

Schilling: Had no choice.

Reynolds: So whereabouts in Wisconsin did you end up?

Schilling: Platteville, down in southwest corner of the state.

Reynolds: That's where the Bears used to have their training camp, just over the border there.

Schilling: That's exactly right. I went back up there ten years ago, eleven years ago and saw it. The only thing there that I recognized was the post office. The home we lived in was down, the hospital was gone. We had fewer than a thousand students there –wartime – but now they have about five thousand.

Reynolds: What years were you in Wisconsin?

Schilling: I was in Wisconsin 1944-45.

Reynolds: And, again, were you married by this point?

Schilling: Yeah, we were.

Reynolds: So you brought your wife up to Wisconsin.

Schilling: And that's where our first child, Mary, was born.

Reynolds: Did you enjoy those winters up there in Wisconsin?

Schilling: This is our wedding picture.

Reynolds: Oh, okay. What were your impressions of Wisconsin?

Schilling: Well, we rented a home for \$35 a month, furnished. It had a basement and we'd buy a cord of wood and a ton of coal about every two weeks. We were broke all winter trying to keep warm. Temperature got down to twenty-three degrees, but it was a good experience. So I stayed there one year.

Reynolds: Now you taught. You were sixth, seventh, eighth again?

Schilling: Sixth, seventh and eighth grade science and math; had small classes. The easiest job I ever had.

Reynolds: So it was like a junior high almost because you were just teaching...

Schilling: It was right in the college building.

Reynolds: Right. What's the college there in Platteville?

Schilling: Pardon?

Reynolds: What's the college there? Is it a branch of the University of Wisconsin?

Schilling: It is now, yes. I wanted to be back in Illinois. And I wanted to be a principal. In the colleges you are sort of isolated from your parents. You know, they say – the college – they know what they're doing, so we don't bother teachers. I wanted contact with parents and teachers. So I came back and I got a wonderful job.

Reynolds: That's just an attitude that they had at that particular site?

Schilling: I think usually, the college says they're doing a good job that's all that's necessary; we don't have to worry about it.

Reynolds: So you weren't driven by local school districts or...

Schilling: We were employed by the college president.

Reynolds: So it was a whole different kind of setting.

Schilling: The president, Dr. Newlin, employed me. \$2500. I could have stayed, but I wanted to get back to Illinois because I had feight years back in Illinois. So I came back to River Forest, Illinois.

Reynolds: Oh, okay, Chicago area.

Schilling: I was principal.

Reynolds: Of an elementary school in River Forest.

Schilling: No teaching responsibilities, just principal. Marvelous experience.

Reynolds: How did you find out about that job? You just saw it advertised somewhere?

Schilling: They had what they call Hughes Teachers Agency in Chicago. Gave your credentials to them and they found you a job. And you paid them, I think ten percent. So I had to pay to get a job.

Reynolds: I bet you were impressed with River Forest. That's a very impressive community.

Schilling: There's north River Forest where the very wealthy are and south River Forest is where...

Reynolds: More middle class people.

Schilling: But the parents were lawyers and doctors and business people.

Reynolds: It would be more like Oak Park maybe.

Schilling: River Forest is right between Oak Park and Maywood. I was right on Washington Boulevard. That schoolhouse building is torn down now.

Reynolds: Really. I went to a school on Washington Boulevard, too – Emerson School in Maywood – so I am very familiar with that area. So how many years in River Forest?

Schilling: Four.

Reynolds: Four years in River Forest as a principal of an elementary school. The name of the school was again?

Schilling: Washington.

Reynolds: Washington School.

Schilling: In 1945 when we went there housing was very tight so I couldn't find a place to live in Maywood, Oak Park, River Forest, no place, Forest Park; they had none. So finally I said to the superintendent who was new—Dr. Birt, he'd come in from Minnesota—I said, “If I can't have a place to live with my family, I can't come.” So he called a meeting of the PTA at Washington School and said, “Look, we got a principal, but we don't have any place for him to live.” Well, fortunately, up at 720 Keystone Avenue, a family, a dentist and his wife, moved in to a big beautiful home. They had a three-car garage, apartment above and for \$50 we could have two rooms and a bath. That's where we lived for four years.

Reynolds: Wow. Not bad. Did you get involved in going down to the City of Chicago at all? Did you enmesh yourself in the culture of the Chicago area at all?

Schilling: Well, the first thing we did was to join church. When we were in Wisconsin we went to a Methodist church; we were members of the Disciples Church. But in River Forest, we became active members in Austin Boulevard Christian Church on Austin Boulevard in Oak Park. We were there four years and we had a good experience. With no money. See it took all the money to live. We didn't have a lot of social life, but we did do some nice things. One year we went to see Sonja Henie at the Ice Capades. [a famous Olympic ice skater]

Reynolds: At the Chicago Stadium?

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Did you? Yeah?

Schilling: We met a man that became a good friend and he had a boat on Lake Michigan. We would go boating on Lake Michigan with him and his family; his name was Raymond Gregory.

Reynolds: That would be fun.

Schilling: And the biggest thing...

Reynolds: Do you remember where you went in on Lake Michigan? Would you ride downtown too?

Schilling: Yes. We'd ride the Northwestern train in. One summer I worked in Mandel Brothers Department Store, eighty-seven and one-half cents an hour.

Reynolds: Was that in Oak Park?

Schilling: Chicago.

Reynolds: That was in downtown Chicago?

Schilling: Right on State Street.

Reynolds: Oh, my goodness. So you commuted down to State Street during in the summer to work. I bet that was an experience, working in downtown for the summer.

Schilling: I believe I'd catch the train at eight o'clock and get down there and had to be in the store at nine and leave at five for eighty-seven and a half cents an hour.

Reynolds: Was the elevated started by then?

Schilling: Yes. The big experience we had, we went to the Chicago Musicland Festival. Our landlord at that time – Dr. Birt was the landlord for two years – then Homer Lange; he had a big floral shop. He and his wife were socialites. So they took us to the Chicago Musicland Festival and instead of sitting out with the 80,000 people in the park...

Reynolds: Do you remember where it was? Was it in Grant Park?

Schilling: Grant Park. We ended up parking our car at the footsteps of the stage and we sat on the stage with all these dignitaries.

Reynolds: That's a big deal.

Schilling: We sat right behind that great famous singer...

Reynolds: So this was at the shell in Grant Park.

Schilling: Yes. The guest artist singer that night was Robert Merrill. [a baritone with the New York Metropolitan Opera] We sat right behind him. And after that we went over to the – I forgot which hotel we went to – a big hotel.

Reynolds: Conrad Hilton?

Schilling: No. It would be on... I've forgotten the name of it. We went there until two o'clock in the morning with the dignitaries. Later on Robert Merrill sang at Kirkland Center in Decatur, Illinois at a concert. I went back stage and said 'Mr. Merrill, I mean nothing to you, but I remember you.' He said, 'How?' And I said, 'Well, in 1947 or '48 you sang at Chicago Musicland.' He said, 'Oh, my god, yes

Reynolds: (chuckles)

Schilling: You ever hear him sing?

Reynolds: No, I recognize the name, but I don't think I've ever heard him sing.

Schilling: Good guy.

Reynolds: You remember any restaurants or other things in Chicago that stick out in your mind? Did you become a sports fan in any degree?

Schilling: We did go several times to the Walnut Room at Field's.

Reynolds: In Marshall Field's.

Schilling: Yes, that's the famous place.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: Speaking of that, my first trip to Chicago is when we're in eighth grade; Kiwanis Club sponsored a trip for students going to Chicago in May of 1929. We went, but it cost us \$5 a head. We left Elkhart about eight o'clock in the morning, got in to Chicago at twelve. We went to the Walnut Room for lunch and saw the Grant Park and the Shedd Aquarium and Field Museum.

Reynolds: Buckingham Fountain?

Schilling: Yeah.

Reynolds: Great. So four years in River Forest and then?

Schilling: Decatur.

Reynolds: Then Decatur, Okay. Now we're back to central Illinois. Because of a better offer or why?

Schilling: In 1949. Well. I loved River Forest and the people were unbelievably good. We had Dr. Charles Hughes, a great doctor, and he and his wife... We just had wonderful support from all parents.

Reynolds: I've got to ask you, because I grew up in that area, any connection to gangsters you had when you were in River Forest? Because that's what we always remembered about River Forest (chuckles) was that some of the most famous gangsters of all times had their homes there. Of course, that was the part that you probably weren't serving.

Schilling: We stayed away from them. (laughs) Tony Accardo had that big home in central part of River Forest and his children went to Roosevelt School. His children went to school in a chauffeur-driven car with a guard who had a gun on each hip.

Reynolds: Yes.

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Well, of course, the story was that his home's plumbing system was solid gold and all that.

Schilling: Yes. Black Onyx.

Reynolds: Well, it's probably good that you didn't have to deal with that in your side of River Forest...

Schilling: We just stayed away from them, but in River Forest we had doctors and lawyers and they were just marvelous people.

Reynolds: Did you get involved in the principals' association and things in the Chicago area?

Schilling: Oh, yes.

Reynolds: Did you get to know a lot of people up there?

Schilling: I was always involved.

Reynolds: Right. You're now in Decatur. Why did you make the move from River Forest? You lived in that apartment the whole time you were in River Forest?

Schilling: Two rooms.

Reynolds: And up to two kids?

Schilling: One child. Fifty dollars a month.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: The OPA Office, Office of Price Administration, [The OPA set government controlled prices and rationing policies during WWII.] wouldn't allow you to charge any more than that. We had wonderful landlords; they were good to us.

Reynolds: Did you own cars during this period?

Schilling: Oh, heaven no.

Reynolds: You could walk to school.

Schilling: Well I only lived, I think, five blocks. No, we had no car. The chief reason we left River Forest – two reasons. I say I loved home, I wanted to get back down somewhere to Lincoln. Again, the chief reason, we could not afford to live in River Forest and we wanted a home. So I applied for a position in Decatur in 1949.

Reynolds: Well, didn't your salary kind of go up while you were in River Forest?

Schilling: I went from three thousand to forty-five hundred.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: But I moved to Decatur for five thousand.

Reynolds: And the cost of living between River Forest and Decatur – we're talking substantial.

Schilling: So we rented in Decatur the first year and then we bought a little house. And the only reason we could buy a four room house was because my mother-in-law had died and we got a little inheritance. So we bought our first house for \$11,500.

Reynolds: What year are we talking about?

Schilling: 1950. We to Decatur in 1949 and we bought the house in June 1950.

Reynolds: How did you connect up with the Decatur job? Was it again through an association or... ?

Schilling: Hughes Teachers' Agency.

Reynolds: Same place that got you the River Forest job.

Schilling: And interestingly enough, I became the principal of E.A. Gasman School which is right downtown. E.A. Gasman, after whom the school was named, was the superintendent of schools in Decatur for forty-seven years. He was the first student to register at Illinois State Normal University in 1857 and was the first graduate of Illinois State Normal University.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: I was principal there for three years. I also was principal the last two years in what they call Little Mound, a five room school north of Decatur. Got along well. I didn't know how fortunate I was; I was invited to become an assistant administrator for elementary schools. So I was assistant to the assistant superintendent or director of elementary schools, Charlotte Meyer.

Reynolds: So the central office in Decatur Public Schools

Schilling: And I was administrative superintendent of elementary schools; I served in that position for eight years—1952 to 1960. We lost a referendum in 1959 and we had five people that were reassigned from the public school office. So I went out to Brush College for four years—1960 to 1964, which is east of town, and then I was at Dennis School, back on the west side of town for seven years—1964 to 1971, and eight years at Southeast school. In the meantime I was visiting associate professor of education at Millikin University.

Reynolds: At Millikin?

Schilling: From 1958 to 1971.

Reynolds: And you taught what kind of classes out at Millikin?



Schilling: Reading methods and child growth development, American public schools and I also supervised student teachers.

Reynolds: But you never went full time to the university setting, always worked as a part-time, adjunct or...

Schilling: I had an opportunity. I was invited to join the staff at Millikin by Dr. Dawald, but to do so would require that I get a doctorate degree.

Reynolds: Oh, I see.

Schilling: So I enrolled at the University of Illinois for graduate school and because I was past forty years old they didn't accept me.

Reynolds: Oh. For doctoral program.

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: How many years total in the Decatur school system?

Schilling: Thirty years.

Reynolds: Thirty years in Decatur.

Schilling: Forty-four years total all over.

Reynolds: Okay and you were principal in what schools?

Schilling: Principal Gastman, Mound, Brush College, Dennis and Southeast.

Reynolds: And taught in what schools?

Schilling: Didn't teach...

Reynolds: Didn't teach at all. You were primarily principal and then for a while an administrator...

Schilling: One of the nice things about Decatur, it was period of change. In the 1950's, without bragging, Decatur was recognized as one of finest school districts in the state. We had opportunities that others never had.

Reynolds: Decatur was an all-American city. It had tremendous industry there.

Schilling: From 1952 to 1960 we built... When I went there we had seventeen elementary schools and in 1960 we had twenty-seven elementary schools. The enrollment in Decatur in 1949, K through high school, was eleven thousand. It went to almost twenty-two thousand in 1969 and now it's eight thousand.

- Reynolds: So you were there during this period when Decatur was growing and then started to contract.
- Schilling: Very sad. Yes. We had a hard time getting teachers. One year at Dennis School we had to have two teachers; in two classrooms a teacher would come in the morning and another teacher in the afternoon. But the nice thing about Decatur for me was getting the opportunity for growth that I never had any place else, because I was privileged to go to a national convention every year with expenses paid. So I became very active in the Association for Childhood Education International, with headquarters in Washington, D.C. And, as such, I attended a week's conference for almost eighteen years. I served as Secretary-Treasurer of the association with headquarters in Washington and I could go to Washington for board meetings. So I met in everywhere from Washington, D.C. to Miami Beach to San Diego, Los Angeles, Portland, Oregon, Chicago.
- Reynolds: During these years in Decatur did you begin to become involved in civic activities in Decatur? To what extent, maybe we'll be talk more about that later.
- Schilling: Well, first of all, we joined and became very active in Central Christian Church. My wife taught Sunday School and I taught Sunday School, was elder and deacon and all. My feeling was if you aren't involved in the activity you don't really learn very much so I became very active in many organizations. I served as the public relations chairman for the South Central Division of IEA for a good many years; that was eleven counties. Then I was elected to the board of directors of the Illinois Education Association, I was a director of that in 1969-1971 and served as the Secretary-Treasurer of the Association of Childhood Education International in 1962-1964. I was very active in the PTA.
- Reynolds: Over those years in Decatur what do you consider your major achievement of being involved with the school for all those years?
- Schilling: That's a hard question.
- Reynolds: Yeah.
- Schilling: I think my greatest satisfaction was being able to help orient the new teachers. We would hire fifty new elementary teachers every year. And we'd have five hundred more children in school in September than we had in May.
- Reynolds: Right.
- Schilling: The other responsibility: my job was to help teachers to become better teachers.

Reynolds: During the years that Decatur was growing and then declining, and you said at one point you consider the Decatur school system one of the finest in the state.

Schilling: It was considered that by a lot of people.

Reynolds: What would you say were the elements that brought the school system down as the population went down in Decatur, as businesses left Decatur? Was it money that hurt the school system the most, or the declining enrollments or the quality of teachers you were able to attract?

Schilling: I hate to say it, but it was integration.

Reynolds: Yes, Okay.

Schilling: Integration.

Reynolds: Did you have a big law suit in Decatur that forced integration like they did in Springfield or...

Schilling: No. We didn't do that. We had the cooperation of the community.

Reynolds: Right. Right.

Schilling: But, you see, you can't legislate where people live. When I was at Dennis School we had, as I remember, maybe only one black family, but when I left there in 1971 we had a good many. Right now in Decatur the enrollment in K through high school is about eight thousand. In most of the schools the school population is 51% black.

Reynolds: Right. So you're dealing with very high poverty rates probably.

Schilling: Very high. People moved out to Forsythe, Maroa, Mt. Zion, Warrensburg.

Reynolds: Did you see a decline in the active participation of parents and did it make it harder to run schools?

Schilling: They renovated the building at Dennis School. I lived just a few blocks from Dennis School for a good many years. I went up to see the building. I met with the principal and said, "What kind of cooperation do you get from parents?" He said, "None. They won't even come to the childrens' school programs."

Reynolds: And that is probably a dramatic shift from what you saw in your early years working at a school system.

Schilling: At Brush College we would have 150 people at PTA meetings.

Reynolds: Right. Did the resources that were available have a major impact, do you think – because property taxes were going down – and was hurting the system in that way?

Schilling: No, I don't think.

Reynolds: You didn't necessarily feel that was a major factor.

Schilling: We had a big residential boom; they built a lot on the outskirts.

Reynolds: Okay. Okay. Anything else you want to say about your very many years in Decatur, working for the district there, being involved in working with teachers?

Schilling: I was very active in the PTA and the Illinois Education Association and Association of Supervision of Curriculum Development. No, the only regret I have in all of this is that every Easter I was away from home in New York, Washington, or wherever an educational conference was being held.

Reynolds: With your various associations.

Schilling: Well one of the things is, that was the opportunity for me to grow professionally because I got to meet the greatest educators in America; became good friends with some of them.

Reynolds: You want to talk about any of them in particular that had a major influence on you?

Schilling: These were more like my colleagues, but Dr. John Goodlad was a graduate of the University of Chicago with Dr. Robert Anderson. Dr. Goodlad and Anderson both became professors at Harvard University. And Dr. Goodlad came to Decatur and talked with our PTA. He is still an old man but he's active at the University of Washington.

Reynolds: Right. Right.

Schilling: But you see, that was the thrill that I had. We had to work hard, but that was a thrill of being able to associate with those people. And we were also very active in legislation. In fact, I served as the Treasurer of the group committee that worked to get the non-elected State Superintendent of Illinois Public Instruction.

Reynolds: Okay. Okay.

Schilling: I'm not sure that was a good thing,

Reynolds: Well, I don't know.

Schilling: It's questionable.

Reynolds: Yeah, it is. I think it's probably debatable.

Schilling: One of the State Superintendents who served several years here was Dr. Robert Leininger.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: I don't know whether you ever knew him?

Reynolds: Yes and I'm familiar with Ray Page, who I think was the last elected Superintendent.

Schilling: And do you know that Bob Leininger is from Elkhart?

Reynolds: Is that right? I didn't know that. I knew he was Illinois though.

Schilling: Yes. He was born in Elkhart, reared in Elkhart. I knew his parents when they got married.

Reynolds: Just to set up your family life. Decatur, you had the home; How many children did you end up having and did they...

Schilling: Mary was born in Platteville, Wisconsin, March 23, 1945 and Susan was born August 16, 1953 in Decatur.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: Mary graduated from Indiana University and Butler, Masters, and taught many years in Indiana and is now retired from teaching. She's also teaching in a corporation that teaches employees who work with the handicapped persons. She took a time out and went up to Wisconsin with a friend, another girl, and they were up in Wisconsin for five years. Susan graduated from Western Illinois University and she's been teaching. She taught in Waukegan five years and now has been in Mt. Zion since 1980. And that's where she met her husband, Michael Bryant.

Reynolds: He's also a teacher; I met him.

Schilling: He taught there two years and then he went to Clinton. He just retired from Clinton this year. But he's now working at Blue Mound Middle School.

Reynolds: And your wife worked in hospitals all this time, or...?

Schilling: When we got married she worked in the hospitals in Oregon for only a few months because she had to come back home to be with her mother who was very ill. She worked for the Gailey Eye Clinic in Bloomington before

we were married, but when we came to Decatur she worked for seventeen years in the Decatur Memorial Hospital.

Reynolds: Okay. And you have one grandson.

Schilling: Yes. The only grandchild I have; there he is: Matthew Schilling Bryant.

Reynolds: There you go.

Schilling: He graduated from Illinois State University.

Reynolds: Oh, good. A lot of tradition with ISU.

Schilling: He is in his third year teaching history and assistant coach of football at Effingham High School.

Reynolds: Oh, Effingham.

Schilling: Last Friday night they played the third game, won all three of them and the big upset was, they beat by 14-13 Newton. Newton is the team that nobody ever beats. So he's on Cloud 9.

Reynolds: Oh, boy. Good for him. Well, I think we're going to wrap up this session and we got a lot of other things we want to talk about in session 2.

Schilling: It's amazing the experiences one can have in 93 years of living.

Reynolds: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. So Roy, I appreciate you giving me kind of the overview of your life up until now and we'll talk about some other subjects.

Schilling: We didn't talk about the homes we had, but we can talk about that, too.

Reynolds: Sure.

Schilling: One thing I'd like to say about after I retired in 1979. Mrs. Schilling didn't like to travel and she wasn't too well. I decided I didn't want to sit at home all the time so I took a job at our church as a Financial Secretary for a year. I stayed fifteen years.

Reynolds: Wow. We're going to talk about your period after you were an educator in Decatur because you're 93 years old so you got quite a few years even after retirement. So I think we'll wrap it up right here and we'll pick it up again in Session 2.

Schilling: I hope I've done a good job here explaining to you what my life has been like.

Reynolds: You're doing great.

Schilling: Somebody says: What do you have as a guiding light? Well, when I was at Columbia University I went to Chapel one morning and Dr. Reinhold Niebuhr, who was born and reared in Lincoln, Illinois, was a professor at the Union Theological Seminary and I heard him preach. So he is the author of the Serenity Prayer.

Reynolds: Oh, yes.

Schilling: You know the Serenity Prayer?

Reynolds: I think I'm familiar with that.

Schilling: And I've quoted that many times. *God grant us the serenity to accept the things that cannot be changed, the courage to change the things we can and the wisdom to know the difference.* And that's pretty important.

Reynolds: That helps.

Schilling: I always told my children: I don't care how bright you are and what you know, if you don't know how to get along with people, you're not going to make it.

Reynolds: Those are good words to live by. Thanks, Roy.

Schilling: Well thank you very much.

(end of interview #1)

## Interview with Roy Schilling

# IS-V-L-2007-016.2

Interview # 1: September 24, 2007

Interviewer: Chris Reynolds

### **COPYRIGHT**

**The following material can be used for educational and other non-commercial purposes without the written permission of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. "Fair use" criteria of Section 107 of the Copyright Act of 1976 must be followed. These materials are not to be deposited in other repositories, nor used for resale or commercial purposes without the authorization from the Audio-Visual Curator at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library, 112 N. 6th Street, Springfield, Illinois 62701. Telephone (217) 785-7955**

Reynolds: Good afternoon. This is the interview number two of a life oral history of Roy Schilling. We're here at the Illinois Information Service on September 24, 2007. My name is Chris Reynolds. I'm a volunteer at the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum. We'd kind of like to start up with some follow-up questions from our first interview. One of the areas that Roy was interested in talking some more about is Elkhart history. So why don't I just let you tell us about that.

Schilling: Well, Chris, I've been going back and reviewing some of the history of Elkhart and I found this very interesting to me that Illinois became a state in 1818. In 1818 a man named James Chapman, married to a woman named Latham, and with her brother came up from Kentucky and settled and spent the winter on the Sangamon River near Springfield. They went on up to Elkhart in the springtime of 1819 and they found Elkhart Hill, which is 770 feet above sea level elevation and is 600 acres of woodland. They were very excited about it so they went back to Kentucky to tell their father and he came up right away in April of 1819 and staked out a claim on the northwest side of the hill. He also at that time built a small cabin, planted thirty acres of corn, went back to Kentucky with the children and brought back his entire family of ten children. They spent the summer doing that. It was quite a big journey, you know; they had a lot of wagons. They finally got settled in September on the hill, September 1819. The first white settlement in Logan County, and as I understand it, it's about the first white settlement that far north in Illinois. From that the town began to grow, very slowly.

Reynolds: Are there other founding fathers that you want to talk about?

Schilling: Yes. The Latham family stayed there and were very active. I want to show you some pictures pretty soon, if I can, of the two boys. They became very famous men, Richard and Robert. They stayed there until 1853. Very active, became very good friends of Abraham Lincoln and Governor Oglesby. I'd like to show you the picture of these. I don't have a picture of James, the father, but this is a picture of Robert, very distinguished man. And his brother, Richard, which is the youngest, I think we got it here. That's Richard. Then what they did a few years ago up on the hill – I took you up there the other day where Wayne Hanner lives – they found the site of the cabin and archeologists came up from somewhere and dug down four feet and they found all the artifacts there – silverware and china and all.

Reynolds: Are those you can see in the museum in downtown Elkhart, right?

Schilling: Yes. They're all in the museum in Elkhart. So that land was owned by Latham until 1853 and then I think they sold it to a man named Thompson. Well, first of all they sold it to Shockey, if I can remember. John Shockey came from Pennsylvania; he owned the land for some time and he sold it to a man named Thompson and Thompson sold the land on



the hill to the Oglesby family in 1888. John Shockey was the founder of Elkhart in 1855. He laid the town out for the first time.

Reynolds: They incorporated with the State of Illinois.

Schilling: They incorporated and began building homes and churches. We have the St. Patrick's Catholic Church. I have the exact dates, but I don't think that's too important. St. Patrick's Catholic Church, the Methodist Church and the Disciples of Christ Christian Church. They're still very active.

Reynolds: Some of the original businesses that started in Elkhart?

Schilling: Of course, I can't go back to 1819 or anything like that, but when I grew up in the 1920's we had a very thriving community. We had the Taylor's General Store which sold about everything you wanted to buy; we had the Stahl's Hardware Store; we had a Ford agency run by Johnnie Oglesby who is no relation to the othr Oglesbyfamily; we had two doctors, Dr. Gwin Taylor who delivered my twin brother Ray and me, and Dr. Hunter; we had, as I say, the Stahl Hardware Store. But to have two doctors in town was very good.

In 1901 the public library was built by one of the Gillett girls, Miss Jessie Gillett. We have a very fine library.

Reynolds: It's a very impressive building as I recall.

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Schools? Had your own schools there? Up until when?

Schilling: The first school, the elementary school, yes. The first school of elementary was built about 1865, just across the road from the main part of town in what was the original John Gillett family farm. It was there until 1923. I went to school my first two years in that old building. It had a two rooms downstairs for first, second grade, third, fourth, fifth, and upstairs we had sixth, seventh and eighth. In 1923 they were able to build a new building of four classrooms. Very sadly, that building has been in existence and operating ever since 1923 until this year; they closed it down in June. There is no elementary school in Elkhart.

The high school was formed in 1920. The classes first met in the town hall and the library and had no building. The first graduating class was 1922, a small class. Then in 1924 the beautiful high school was built on the west side of town. That high school operated from 1924 until 1974 and it was closed, unfortunately; that's the school from which I graduated. We had excellent teachers. I went back to check on some of them. We had, during that fifty-year period, eight different principals. W.W. Ritchie served as principal thirty-three years, from 1938 to 1965.

Reynolds: Long period.

Schilling: Fine memories. So they tore the building down, as they do, and made a park on those grounds. (chuckles)

Reynolds: A consolidation with another school district at some point?

Schilling: Both schools are now in Mt. Pulaski.

Reynolds: Yes. Was that a painful decision for the community? Was there a referendum that made that decision?

Schilling: School board just decided to do it, I guess.

Reynolds: Just decided to do it.

Schilling: Up until about 1945 or -6 we had a lot of rural schools, so they consolidated the rural schools and they all came in to Elkhart Grade School. But unfortunately, we don't have any schools. We have no stores, we have no business; it's still pretty active, but not much business going on.

Reynolds: A couple of good restaurants there.

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Couple of good restaurants there. Anything else you'd like to say about Elkhart before we move on.

Schilling: Well, let's see, I can refer to my notes here. I don't know. Well, let's see I mentioned the churches, the business.

Reynolds: We'll probably get back to Elkhart when we talk about Oglesby.

Schilling: I don't wish to brag about anything, but we had some very fine students. I'd like to mention only one.

Reynolds: Sure.

Schilling: Well, Joseph Lanterman. He's a year older than I, but he became a very large businessman. He became the President and CEO of the Amsted Corporation [Amsted Industries, Inc.] of Chicago; he was a good friend of mine. One was a doctor, we had a lot of them that were teachers, most of them were farmers.

Reynolds: You spoke of the Hickey family, I think, before. Are they from Elkhart originally?

Schilling: You know, another thing I thought I might mention is the diversity of the population, which is very interesting for a small community. The largest number of residents were Irish immigrants, farmers: the Fitzgibbon's, the Fitzgerald's, the Murphy's, the Tierney's, Walsh's, all kinds of them. We have four Swedish families: the Olson's, the Johnson's, the Ebbersten's and the Larson's and that was the four of them. I've always felt very fortunate that we were able to have black families. We had about five or six black families. Two of them, Mr. John Brunner and Mr. Kibby were farmers and they had children. Mr. Brunner lived across the field from us, across the road from us, west of Elkhart and was an excellent neighbor. I tell an interesting little story. When my father died; he was killed on August 21, 1951, burned to death. Mr. Bruner came to the house and he

was an old gentleman, white haired and he kept saying, “Mr. Schilling, just think: neighbors in life and neighbors in death.” He kept saying that. I said, “Mr. Brunner, I don’t know what you’re talking about.” He said, “Oh, you do too. You know when you were a little tot you lived up there on the hill across from us, Now my daughter, Ollie, and my wife are buried up there in the cemetery and your brother Ray’s buried right beside, so we’re going to be neighbors in death.” You know, that is very comforting. Very comforting. We had the Woolery family, too.

Reynolds: Are there some African-American people buried at the cemetery up there?

Schilling: Oh, yes. Oh, yes. Cook family, Allison’s and I think we had seven or eight, with Allison’s, Bonaparte Cook’s and Hammond’s, and Brunner’s. I We might have one family left.

Reynolds: Right. Right.

Schilling: And they were descendants of the first family.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: I think that pretty well covers the black families.

Reynolds: I know one of the subjects that we talked about in our last interview was your long career with the Decatur Public Schools. We touched on the decline of the school system there in Decatur during the years that you were there. We talked a little bit about race relations in Decatur. I’m kind of interested again in your views on why the school system declined, whether it could have been avoided maybe, in some way, and maybe some things that we’ve learned from that, you learned from that as a principal. You were a principal and a former teacher; you were a university professor who was teaching other teachers. I’m kind of interested in your perspective on that.

Schilling: Well, I came to Decatur August 25, 1949 as principal of E.A. Gasman School, which was right downtown. I felt very fortunate because, as I said, E.A.Gasman was the first student to be enrolled at Illinois State Normal University in 1857. He came down to Decatur in 1861. and never did go any place else. He graduated in 1861, came to Decatur and served as our superintendent for forty-seven years. When I arrived in Decatur it was a big change-over. You see, up until about that time when a teacher was employed the school board or the superintendent told you what your salary was and that was it. But they began to get what they call, I don’t like the word, but “union.” We called it the Decatur Education Association and they wanted some change and they made big changes. We had summer schools.

Reynolds: We’re talking about ‘50s for the most part when that occurred?

Schilling: In the early ‘50s we had school year around. Well, not for everybody. But the teachers were on duty twelve months a year. They got off one year to go to summer school, and they worked in summer school. From 1952

when I went in as an administrative assistant, elementary, from 1952 to 1960 we built seventeen new elementary schools and two new high schools. In 1959 a referendum failure caused us to reduce the staff. At that time I was one of five re-assigned to different positions and I went out to Brush College School to be the principal. Now people say: What's Brush College? (chuckles) Well it's an elementary school. It was part of Lakeview School District. In 1959 we didn't only lose the referendum, we also annexed Lakeview School District. We had a high school and about four elementary schools: Excelsior, Eldorado, Brush College 1 and Brush College 2, which later became Spencer School.

Reynolds: Some of the surrounding areas in Decatur.

Schilling: Yes. The school enrollment went from around 11,000 in 1949 to almost 23,000 in 1969. Teachers were hard to find, good teachers. I remember at Dennis School when I was there from 1964-71, I had to have two classrooms with two teachers, one in the morning, one in the afternoon. We also made history because in 1953 the first black teacher was employed; Louise Johnson came to us from Champaign-Urbana, a wonderful, wonderful woman. She became a principal and was one of my closest friends. Then in 1969 we integrated and that's the beginning of decline in enrollment.

Reynolds: Had this gradually happened with housing patterns or was there some sort of integration lawsuit?

Schilling: In 1969 Millikin University was located at Main Street and Fairview Avenue, and there's not a black family west of Fairview Avenue except one. The Reverend Chendennon, a minister, was the only one. With integration, housing became open and people moved.

Reynolds: So federal law probably influenced it more than anything else.

Schilling: Very definitely. So things began changing and it's been gradual, but some good and some bad. They made some – I don't like to criticize – made some bad mistakes. Sometimes they've changed where the children were going to go and then began busing.

Reynolds: Mistakes in terms of boundaries of schools, or what kind of mistakes?

Schilling: Well, they would change the arrangement from junior high to what they called middle school.

Reynolds: Oh, you mean in terms of how they arranged the schools.

Schilling: One year they took from Dennis School where I was, I had only kindergarten through fourth grade and then they brought them back the next year. So they moved them around a lot.

Reynolds: Typical for management.

Schilling: People didn't like that and they began busing. Another thing we began doing...

Reynolds: What prompted the busing? Do you remember?

Schilling: Well they were trying to integrate and to integrate you had to take children from different parts of town. The other thing, we only had one high school until 1958. In 1958 we opened up Eisenhower and MacArthur High Schools, and they had a lunch program. Elementary schools had no lunch program, but they began lunch programs and that was a big change and that was helpful.

You asked about the changes. Of course, I've been retired almost twenty-nine years and I've kept in touch with the families and superintendents. A year ago a very wonderful black lady named Gloria Davis was hired from Dodgeville, Kansas. The newspaper said: "We're going to get a sheriff (chuckles) from Dodgeville." So she came to town and she is full of life and she began talking to the public. She made contact with all the service clubs and churches and she said, To get this school moving we have to involve the family, the community. So I kept thinking: Now it's a good idea but what's going to happen? This has happened

Reynolds: Have they passed some referendums in recent years?

Schilling: It took several years before we could get a referendum to do anything, but we finally made it. I'm always very happy when my students do well. I had a little black girl at Southeast School; she's an Assistant Superintendent so I called her last Saturday and said, "Marla, can you tell me what changes have been taking place?" She studied, then she said, "Well, I can give you some of them." Mrs. Davis said, "You've got to hold the children to high standards". So they have created more advanced classes, science and math particularly. They have increased the graduation requirements. What they were doing, they were trying, we might say, to water down the curriculum so students could pass. That's no more. That's no more. They had teaching assistants in all grades, which is a big help. I keep thinking how I'd love to have had some help when I was in Lincoln teaching forty-four children and no help. The test scores fortunately are increasing, improving, which is a big help. The drop-out problem has been decreased.

Reynolds: Sounds like they're making a lot of progress.

Schilling: The big thing is the increase in communication and involvement of the community.

Reynolds: So that community involvement really maybe was the key issue, that they lacked before that they now have.

Schilling: It's been a big help.

Reynolds: Do you have a sense that race relations in Decatur has improved? We're all familiar with the incidents that have happened that have brought Jesse Jackson to town.

Schilling: Don't talk about that (chuckles)

Reynolds: Well.

Schilling: He came to town in 1999. What happened, four black boys had a big fight at a football game and they were expelled.

Reynolds: I believe that fight was on film, because we all saw it hundreds of times. (chuckles)

Schilling: I was in Mexico City at that time for Thanksgiving; the papers were full of it down in Mexico City. But it's unfortunate. Well, they got the boys back in school and Jesse Jackson did come, but it was an unfortunate circumstance. But things have calmed down. One thing I think is because they're keeping these boys in school, all of them. Big difference.

Reynolds: Now I know over the years, because you were attached to many educational-type organizations, that you probably had some impact on educational legislation. Can you talk about that a little bit – the things that you were involved with over the years.

Schilling: Yes. Yes. I can't tell you how many times, how many trips I made to the Statehouse. I've had conference with Governor Kerner. I knew personally some of the legislators. And I remember I had a conference with Governor Kerner with a committee asking if we could have appointed Superintendent of Schools, rather than an elected Superintendent.

Reynolds: Do you recall what year you requested that or made that known as an issue that you were interested in?

Schilling: I'm not quite sure, but I can remember...

Reynolds: How many years before it actually happened?

Schilling: Well, it was during Governor Kerner's service

Reynolds: Okay. Yeah.

Schilling: There were about five of us who met in the Governor's office day after Christmas. One of the men from Illinois Education Association was trying to put words into Governor Kerner's mouth. Kerner said, "I said this this, this, dammit, this is it." He was for it, but he didn't want to be told how to do it. (chuckles) I'll never forget what I did; I made notes and kept a seating chart of the persons who were there.

Reynolds: Can you remember who was there?

Schilling: Not really.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: It's been too long ago.

Reynolds: Governor and his staff and several...

Schilling: No, just the Governor himself.

Reynolds: Just the Governor himself. Was it at the Mansion or the Capitol?

Schilling: It was in his office.

Reynolds: Oh, okay. At the Capitol you think?

Schilling: Yes. The other folks were from the Illinois Education Association.

Reynolds: Right. Right. Any other pieces of legislation you could remember lobbying for?

Schilling: Yes. We had a study with a number of school districts in the state and we spent many years working at changing the kindergarten admission age. At that time children could be admitted at age five up through December the first. And we didn't think that was too good. So through the University of Illinois Department of Education with Dr. Fred Barnes, Rockford, Peoria, Kankakee and Decatur schools worked several years trying to get that legislation changed. We did not succeed. But now, I believe, the kindergarten entrance age is September.

Reynolds: September.

Schilling: Which is a big improvement.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: Children need to be given time to develop. Of course, the nice thing now, they have pre-school education in a lot of the schools. Another reason for the decrease in population other than integration: parochial schools and private schools. Big help.

Reynolds: Charter schools.

Schilling: And they're all good. They're all good.

Reynolds: Right. Even lots of choices within the public system, which is good. Anything else in the educational legislation area you can think of?

Schilling: I think I mentioned to you that when I went in to the Decatur public school office Miss Charlotte Meyer was the assistant superintendent and I served as her assistant and working with her. I was given the opportunity to select a teacher education association of some kind to attend annual conferences. She was going to conferences where the association and supervision of curriculum development were held. She suggested that I become involved in the Association for Childhood Education International, which is a wonderful, wonderful organization. So I became very active in that and went to conferences for about eighteen years in Washington, Miami Beach, Portland, Los Angeles, New Orleans. Through that I met many of the great educators of the nation, and became acquainted with them. We worked on legislation.

Reynolds: At the national level.

Schilling: Yes. In 1962 we had what we called state chairman, legislation chairman. In 1962 I went to Omaha and was trying to build interest in legislation; as

a result that next August we had a workshop in Washington with thirty-six state chairmen present.

Reynolds: Do you remember whose presidential administration that was? You said, sixty...

Schilling: Sixty-two.

Reynolds: So it would have been Lyndon Johnson.

Schilling: Yes, it was.

Reynolds: Yeah. Do you recall any of the national leadership at that point?

Schilling: You bet I do. I can name a lot of them. But the one I would like to mention is Dr. Helen Heffernan who was the Chief of the Bureau of Elementary Education, State of California. She was not an officer of our association, but she came every year to the meeting. In 1962 at Indianapolis, I was elected the Secretary-Treasurer of the association, serving two years. In 1963 we went to Miami Beach, Florida. In 1964 we went to Portland, Oregon, and Dr. Heffernan was there. She wasn't invited, but she just came. She was a very large woman. She said one thing: "I think the arts in the elementary education in Decatur, in the United States, are being neglected. So here's a check for ten thousand dollars; I want you to do something about it." So I came back home felt obligated to do something, and as a result we had the first art show at Dennis School. I take great pride in that.

Reynolds: Is that continued to this day?

Schilling: In fact, we had our first art show the year before the Decatur Area Arts Council was founded; the Decatur Area Arts Council is very prominent organization now. But Dr. Heffernan, too was the kind of person who got things done. At my invitation she came to Decatur and spoke to about three hundred teachers and principals for us. After World War II Japan needed a new educational program. The only one they would accept would be Dr. Heffernan. The State Department of the United States sent Dr. Heffernan to Japan and she spent eighteen months with General MacArthur in his headquarters and built it the elementary curriculum. So having that kind of experience, she'd been in California for thirty-nine years.

Reynolds: She's the Superintendent of Schools in California?

Schilling: Assistant Superintendent.

Reynolds: Assistant Superintendent.

Schilling: She was originally from Massachusetts. The redwood forest needed attention. Teachers and children had so much respect for her that they set aside thirty acres of land and raised money for the preservation of part of that forest in memory of Dr. Heffernan. I met a lot of them. I could name a lot more of them. I think I mentioned Dr. Goodlad. I met Dr. John



Goodlad when I was principal of Washington School in River Forest. He and another one of my fellow principals, Dr. Bob Anderson, both went to Harvard University. Dr. Goodlad is still very active at the University of Washington.

Reynolds: Well, do you think we've covered the education area?

Schilling: I hope so. (chuckles)

Reynolds: It's quite a career you've had. Since you have been retired for almost thirty years now, as I think I heard you say, let's talk about your life since you've been retired: travel, your involvement with churches, maybe civic organizations.

Schilling: During the time I was in public schools, I was very active. I was the legislation chairman for the PTA, the local and the regional. I retired in June 22, 1979, after forty-four years at age sixty-five. I started teaching at age twenty-one and quit at sixty-five. And, someone said: Why? I said: Well it just felt like it should be done. I could have stayed on. Interestingly enough, laws are funny. You see there was a law... Well, maybe I shouldn't tell this story, but it's interesting. My predecessor at the E. A. Gasman School in Decatur had been there thirty-three years and she was a wonderful teacher, a wonderful principal. But you know, like so many people, when you get old things change. So the school board wanted to dismiss her and she wasn't ready to quit so they passed a resolution in the spring of 1949 which said all school employees that reach the age of sixty-five before July the first are done. And that's how Miss McMillan left her job. And that was when I was employed.

Reynolds: Do you think that's a bad rule?

Schilling: She didn't like me. I think it's a terrible rule. In 1979 when I retired the federal government changed that so I could have stayed on.

Reynolds: Really.

Schilling: But I didn't want to.

Reynolds: The federal government passed a law that didn't allow local school districts to require an age for retirement?

Schilling: You cannot fire a person, dismiss a person, who's reached sixty-five.

Reynolds: Okay. It would be age discrimination.

Schilling: On age. Yes.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: So anyway I had traveled some. Mrs. Schilling did not like to travel and she said: You go ahead, I don't mind. So in 1975 I went to Germany and Austria. Then in 1976 I spent two weeks in England, Scotland, Ireland, which are wonderful. But at retirement age, Mrs. Schilling wasn't really well, so I didn't want to go away and leave her.

Reynolds: Did your wife already retire from being a nurse?

Schilling: Yes. She retired. Yes, she was seventeen years at Decatur Memorial Hospital. When I retired I got tired of going to bazaars and yard sales and all that kind of stuff, so there was an opening in our church, Central Christian Church in Decatur, for a Financial Secretary. I told my wife, I think I'd like to take that job if I can get it. And she said, Well, if you want to, that's okay. She was always very supportive; never complained about what I was doing, always great. So I called the minister and got an interview with Dr. C. William Nichols, who was a great minister. And he said: Well, why do you want to work? You're retired. I said: I like figures and I like people. He said: How long you want this job for? I said: Well, at least a year. I stayed fourteen years and nine months. I retired on January first 1995.

Reynolds: Second career.

Schilling: It was when we had four ministers, four custodians and a nursery school; my job was to keep the financial records. I had no authority to write a check, I did not make church deposits, I just kept the records.

Reynolds: What involvement in political or civic organizations there in Decatur?

Schilling: In the mean time, the only reason I could stay fourteen years and nine months in my position as Financial Secretary, I had a little boy in kindergarten named John Baird, Jr. who was very good on computers. When he'd bring his little girls to choir practice he'd come in and help me; he taught me everything I knew about the computers. One year, when we got on full line, he came in from January to March. I kept record of his work; he spent one hundred and five hours in my office and we're still very, very close friends.

Reynolds: All volunteer.

Schilling: Yes. All volunteer. So having that experience was special.

Reynolds: And yours is a paid position, right?

Schilling: Pardon.

Reynolds: Yours is a paid position, right?

Schilling: (chuckles)

Reynolds: Not very much, but...

Schilling: I did get Social Security from working at Millikin University in addition to my teacher's retirement. So the most I could get in 1980 was five thousand dollars. So I worked for five thousand dollars.

Reynolds: Because of the restrictions of Social Security.

Schilling: Because if I worked overtime, Social Security would charge me. I worked hard and was very devoted to my job. When I left my salary was eighteen thousand dollars. But the wonderful thing about being in church, I got to

meet the people and I got to work with wonderful people. Dr. C. William Nichols, who is going to be eighty years old October the second, is very, very ill. He was our minister for nineteen years. He went to Washington to become the minister of the National City Christian Church. He also became the president and general minister of Our Disciples with headquarters in Indianapolis.

Reynolds: How many hours a week did you work on that job? Were you full time? Forty hours?

Schilling: I worked from eight o'clock to five, five days a week.

Reynolds: You worked forty hours. Okay.

Schilling: And sometimes all weekend.

Reynolds: Yeah.

Schilling: The reason I left... Well actually, they asked me to leave. (chuckles)

Reynolds: A second retirement.

Schilling: Well we were having financial difficulties, and we had a change of minister. And like a lot of churches, when you change ministers, people leave. Our membership went down and we were having some financial problems so they said they thought the best thing to do is to change it. So the position I held was never refilled; secretaries kept some of the financial records.

Reynolds: You can't be replaced.

Schilling: Working without computers it'd take me all the month of December, January to figure out the report for the taxes. And then I'd have to type, three names to a page, the W-2 forms. And when I retired, I could do that by January second with the computer.

Reynolds: When did you get involved with the Macon County Historical Society?

Schilling: Oh.

Reynolds: And how did you get involved? Did you just...

Schilling: The Macon County Historical Society was organized in 1916 or -17. It lay dormant until about 1969. Teachers, bless the teachers, a couple of teachers said we ought to do something about this. So we re-activated and so I became a real active member of the Macon County Historical Society in 1971. I'm still active. We bought a church just north of the Decatur airport and opened up a museum which wasn't very good. And then later in 1979 when we took in the Lakeview School District we didn't need some of those elementary schools so we were given for a small price from the Decatur School District, Eldorado School. And that is our museum today. It was dedicated...

Reynolds: That's out by the airport also, isn't it?

Schilling: Yes. It was dedicated July 17, 1979. At that time I was president of the society and worked hard. We had lots of help. We do have a beautiful museum complex.

Reynolds: Were you involved in the moving of that log cabin which Abraham Lincoln practiced law in?

Schilling: Oh, gosh yes. Yes, I was. We had that and it's been kept up. We also moved a rural school house, we have a caboose, we have a print shop, we have a blacksmith shop.

Reynolds: I kind of call it Prairie Village, I believe it's referred to. How many places was that log cabin that was the...

Schilling: Well, I think I showed it to you downtown. It was right down on the square in March 1830 when Abraham Lincoln came to Decatur. They moved it out into Fairview Park and it was there for many years. I remember it being in Fairview Park, just nothing in it. And then I don't remember the exact dates of moving.

Reynolds: After it was open to the public or whatever?

Schilling: Well, actually it was used as a polling place for voting.

Reynolds: Really.

Schilling: I voted in it.

Reynolds: All along they knew that this was the cabin that Lincoln practiced law in.

Schilling: So we moved it out to the museum about – I don't remember what year it was moved and restored. It cost quite a bit of money. But the nice thing about it – I'm trying to think back about three years ago – John McClarey, who is the internationally known sculptor of Abraham Lincoln statues, he's the one who sculpted the statue that sits near and in front of the courthouse. John has Lincoln statues in Havana, Cuba, Moscow, Charleston, New Salem and Springfield.

Reynolds: All of Lincoln or different?

Schilling: All of Lincoln. Taylorville, Peoria, New Salem State Park. He has two statues of Abraham Lincoln in Japan and I'm responsible for one of them. John was one of my students at Millikin University in 1959 and thirty years later, we were standing at President Kennedy's grave in Washington, Arlington Cemetery, where he'd gone with the church choir and he came to me and said, Good morning Mr. Schilling; do you know who I am? I said, No. He said, Well, you were my teacher at Millikin. I said, Oh, really? Yes, 1959. I remember. I had not seen him in thirty years. He said, – and I don't like to say this – Do you know what I remember most about you? I said, I have no idea. He said, You wore such pretty suits. (chuckles). I said, Forget it. Did you learn anything? He said, Well I taught school twenty-seven years. Later we became acquainted and I

found out that his grandfather was the Elkhart Methodist minister in 1923 or -4. His mother graduated from Elkhart High School.

Reynolds: So it's an Elkhart connection?

Schilling: His grandmother Park was a cousin of my grandmother Schilling in Ohio. So we're distant cousins. He has a beautiful studio out north of Decatur.

Reynolds: And he's done that full time?

Schilling: Yes. Now with regard to the statue, he has a statue in some museum – I'm not sure where – in Japan. In my travels, I've been so fortunate. In 1998 I was in Lake Louise, Canada and wanting to take a picture of the sunrise over the mountain and my camera didn't work. I walked over to this young Japanese couple who were there, and I said, Would you be able to help me with my camera? She did not understand English, but he did. And he said, No, I can't help you, but I will take your picture and mail it. So he took pictures and we talked and he interpreted to his wife. We got back to the hotel. Now he was twenty-seven years old, I think, at that time. He said, I want to say something before we part. We want to tell you we've enjoyed our visit with you and I had a wonderful grandpa in Japan and now I want you to be my grandpa in America. He threw his arm around me and hugged me and kissed me and his wife did. So he sent me the picture and I said: Hiroshi, I'd like to reimburse you. He said, No, grandpa, it's my pleasure to send you the picture, but when we come to visit you, we'd like to have lunch. He was joking. I asked them to come and they came for the Decatur Celebration in 1998 and spent five days with me. They learned to know John McClarey and a good many of my friends. I'm talking about travel now. In 2000 he said: Why don't you come to visit me? I never dreamed of going to Japan at my age. So anyway he invited me to come.

Reynolds: This is in nineteen...

Schilling: Two thousand.

Reynolds: 2000

Schilling: Seven years ago. I was eighty-six years old. So anyway he invited me to come to Japan and I took with me my friend, Dale Miller, whose wife was in a nursing home; my wife had passed away February 3, 1996. So we went and we spent about ten days with them in Japan and we were treated like royalty. We had lunch at their home, we had lunch at his parents' home, we had lunch at her parents' home, we traveled seven hundred miles, we saw the temples, we saw the pageants, it was a holiday. The highlight of the trip, as beautiful as it was, was when we went to his parents' home on Sunday afternoon, none of them spoke English. When we got there the father said he wanted me to sit down. We sat down at the end of the table. He had two pieces of paper on which there were English and Japanese sentences. He said, "My name is Tonaka, age fifty-nine; my wife is such, Tonaka. We want to thank you for the kindness you showed

our son and daughter-in-law when they visited you. You are welcome to our home. We hope you have a good visit.” Spoken in perfect English. I said to Hiroshi: How could your father do that? He said: Three weeks before you were to arrive he worked in a railroad office with a man who knew English and he practiced. To me, that was the highlight of the trip. That was the highest honor he could give me.

Reynolds: Now, the connection to the sculpture.

Schilling: Well, then they were here for Decatur Celebration in 1999 – I got pictures of all of them – and we went to... Here we are.

Reynolds: There was newspaper coverage of it.

Schilling: Yes. He came back just three years ago, he and Hiroka, his wife. They had met John Baird and John McClarey and a good many of my friends. The first time they were here he was having a birthday. So I had a big birthday party at my home for him and John Baird, who had a birthday. This time we spent Sunday afternoon at John McClarey’s home and his studio. When we left John said to me: Here is a statue of Lincoln. (It’s an exact replica of the one that’s in the museum, about this high) I’m giving this to you, but I want you to give it to Hiroshi.

Reynolds: Which museum? The museum in Decatur?

Schilling: Yes. It’s a replica of the Lincoln statue at the Macon County Historical Society. It’s a small one.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: He said: I’m giving this to you, but I want you to give it to Hiroshi. I gave it to him, and he was thrilled to death. So there are two statues in Japan. So that’s my story on that. How fortunate I’ve been.

Reynolds: Really.

Schilling: About a year ago Hiroshi called me one Saturday night – at ten o’clock in Decatur it’s two p.m. on Sunday afternoon in Japan – he says: Grandpa, I want you to go to your computer and do what I ask you to do. I did, and as a result I got a little web cam and microphone. Now when he calls, when he’s on computer and I’m on computer, I talk to him just like I see you.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: Real exciting.

Reynolds: And this relationship has lasted now for how many years?

Schilling: Since 1998.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: And it will last forever. He’ll be back to see me again, I hope.

Reynolds: Any other travel related stories you want to talk about?

- Schilling: I mentioned '75 and '76. After Rachel, my wife, died I felt free to travel. I didn't want to go off and leave her before that. So in 1997 – I always wanted to go to Alaska – so I decided to do it. So I took my two daughters—Mary and Susan, son-in-law Mike Bryant and my grandson, Matthew and we went to Alaska. We flew from Seattle to Fairbanks and then took the train down to Anchorage and to Seward and did seven days on the Crown Princess. That made me want to travel more. So the next year I went to the Greek Islands with Dr. Nichols and we traveled in what they call the Footsteps of Paul, a wonderful experience. I think – my dates might be wrong – I spent July in the Hawaiian Islands; it was in '98. Then I took the train trip from Vancouver to Jasper down to Lake Louise and that's where I met my Japanese friends, Hiroshi, Hiroko and Tanaka.
- Reynolds: Yeah.
- Schilling: In 1999 I did the Columbia River cruise. In 1999 I went to Norway, Sweden and Denmark. I spent Thanksgiving 1999 and ten days in Mexico City with my distant cousin, Ruth; her name is Ruth Broehl Dove. I spent ten days in Mexico City. Reynolds: And you're still travelling.
- Schilling: Yes. In 1993 I went by train to Boston and did the New England states, went down to North Carolina on a tour. I'm real excited now. A week from this afternoon I'll be on the train headed to the state of Washington. My friend Dale Mellon and I are going.
- Reynolds: Probably been to Washington, D.C. before, haven't you?
- Schilling: Yes, but this is Washington State.
- Reynolds: Oh, Washington State. Oh, Okay.
- Schilling: Washington, D.C.: I've been to Washington, D.C. nine times. No, we're going to Washington State. Up through Minneapolis, Bismarck, and Montana, Idaho and Washington. Dale has cousins at Bellingham. We'll spend about five or six days there and then we'll take the train to Los Angeles where I'll visit my twin brother's widow and my niece and come back the southern route. Travel is so..., well, you learn a lot. Mary, my older daughter, is eight years older than my younger daughter Susan. When Mary was twenty-four and Susan was sixteen, Mary went with another teacher and took a group of students to Scotland for summer school; they went to Kings College in Aberdeen, Scotland. When they came home I said: Girls, tell me, what was the most exciting thing, what was the most pleasant experience you had? Each of them said: Dad, it was the people, the people. I think that's true anywhere. That's what I found out in Germany, Scotland, everywhere – people were so kind.
- Reynolds: You meet somebody from Japan and you become life-long friends. I remember in our last interview you said you wanted to talk a little bit about your homes in Decatur. Is there something you wanted to talk about in terms of the various homes you've had in Decatur, or...

Schilling: You see, when we came down from River Forest in 1949, we lived in two rooms and a garage apartment. We came down to Decatur and we rented an apartment across the street from Roach School, which is being renovated now. In 1950 my mother-in-law unfortunately had passed away. I was thirty-five years old, almost thirty-six. Had no money to buy a home, but we bought a little four room home at 1568 Sunset Avenue and lived there four years. Then we bought a very nice bungalow over near Millikin University, over on Woodlawn. We lived there for twenty-four years. And then we moved to California Avenue, which is a ranch house next to Lake Tokorozaha—that's Lake Decatur (chuckles)—named after sister city of Japan. We lived there until 1994. In 1994 my daughter, Susan and husband Mike Bryant were living out on Hillcrest Boulevard, out near Scoville Golf Course and there was a vacant lot second door from them. The home on California Avenue had a lot of steps and I wanted to be close to my family, particularly since my wife was very ill. So I bought the lot and built a very comfortable home there of three bedrooms, three and one-half baths.

Reynolds: How old were you when you decided to build a home on a lot?

Schilling: Well, that was in 1994, so I was eighty. I had a wonderful experience, though. It's a flat lot. A fence in the back yard separates my back yard from the conservation district and so I got to see the deer and the raccoons and the opossums and all that, you know. So I built this home and enjoyed it. As I said, I like people. So what did I do? The first year was '95. I spent much of the time at the nursing home, almost every day, and took care of the lawn; I had to water and all, but I began to ask people to come to visit. In that very first year, even with my wife in the nursing home, I cooked and served lunch or dinner for sixty people. Now, ten of them stayed all night and they came from five states. I would have a very good fellow principal who retired in 1971 to Florida. He came through every June on his way to Colorado and stopped and visited with me. And then in September he'd come back through. He used to stay all night with me. So I had a real good time.

Reynolds: Anything else you want to say about Decatur's history or any of the cultural events there, or...

Schilling: Decatur is very fortunate to have Millikin University, which was established in 1902 by James Millikin. James Millikin was a big land owner, a banker and he told the citizens of Decatur that he'd give two hundred thousand dollars if they would match it. And that's how Millikin University began. It was a part of Lincoln College, which is a Presbyterian school. But Millikin separated from Lincoln College. So that's the beginning. And who came to dedicate Millikin University? President Roosevelt, Teddy Roosevelt.

Reynolds: Were you there?



Schilling: (Both laugh) 1902, not hardly. It's a very interesting place. We have Kirkland Fine Arts Center.

Reynolds: Now, which Roosevelt?

Schilling: Pardon. Theodore Roosevelt, 1902.

Reynolds: Okay. You could have made the Franklin Roosevelt event.

Schilling: Pardon?

Reynolds: You could have made the Franklin Roosevelt.

Schilling: Well, I can talk about the presidents, too, because I've seen most of them since Hoover. Mrs. Kirkland was a very wealthy woman. She had a...

Reynolds: Fine Arts Center is named after her.

Schilling: Well, yes. She had a big pharmaceutical company and so she built Kirkland Center. I mean paid the money for it. We have concerts, we have plays, we have everything. It's the culture center. Of course, in addition to that, we have Richland Community College, another big asset. And I think maybe you know, too, and I know Dr. Gayle Saunders who's the president there, graduate of Illinois State University: the Farm Progress Show for the nation. Two years ago they decided that the Farm Progress Show should be held only in two places in the United States: one in Iowa and one in Decatur. So every other year for the next twenty years the Farm Progress Show will be here in Decatur.

Reynolds: Big show. Big show.

Schilling: They held it August the 28<sup>th</sup>, 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup> this year and they had 300,000 people in attendance.

Reynolds: That's a big show.

Schilling: Dale and I were fortunate; we knew some people at the college and they gave us free tickets and a car and we toured the Farm Progress Show. One hundred and seventy-five planes flew in to Decatur. (chuckles) They came, not only from almost every state, but foreign countries.

Reynolds: Do you think Decatur does a pretty good job of making its connection to the Lincoln story, or what's your perspective on that? I think I've heard statements that Decatur is probably as important to Lincoln's history as, maybe as Springfield, or some of these other locations in the state.

Schilling: I'd like to think so. I'm not sure that the Springfield people would approve that statement. Lincoln came with his family to Decatur at age twenty-one in 1830, and stayed all night right there in the center of town; went out to about seven miles west of Decatur and built a home and it was a very, very bad winter. It was one of the worst winters anybody ever had. I don't know how long the Lincoln family stayed there; I think maybe a year or two. Abraham took off and went to New Salem.

Reynolds: New Salem.

Schilling: New Salem. The family went back down there near Charleston. So Abraham Lincoln really got his start, you might say, in New Salem. Lincoln, of course, studied law in Springfield, and Oglesby came to Decatur, let's see, I've forgotten the exact date. He was nine years old, so about 1833,

Reynolds: You're talking about the Governor?

Schilling: About 1883, nine years old. Oglesby came to Decatur because he had two sisters living here; he also had an uncle and an aunt. His sisters were Mrs. Prater and Mrs. Peddicord, but he established himself in Decatur. He went back to Kentucky and worked down there, but he finally came back. He studied law and met Lincoln; he was sixteen years old. I think there was difference, if Governor Oglesby was born in July 25, 1824 in Oldham County, Kentucky.

Reynolds: What were the circumstances of their meeting, do you recall?

Schilling: No, just through law. I think...

Reynolds: At such a young age.

Schilling: Yes, and they became very close friends. In fact, I've read in Dr. Plummer's biography of Oglesby, Lincoln said that Governor Oglesby was his closest personal friend.

Reynolds: Let's talk about that. I noticed you were acknowledged in the Acknowledgements of the Plummer book. Did he contact you on several occasions to talk about the Oglesby book?

Schilling: Dr. Plummer is a retired professor of history at Illinois State University. He used to come to the Oglesby mansion in Decatur for social occasions and I became acquainted with him. He found out that I had known the Oglesby family so I took him down to the Greenwood Cemetery in Decatur where the Governor's first wife and three children are buried and talked with him about different aspects of the Oglesby family. Every time I talked with him I kept thinking: So many people talk about Lincoln and Oglesby and their facts are not accurate. (chuckles) So I kept thinking: Does he really know what's going on? Well, he did twenty-three years of research to do that book, published in 2001. I went to the library to get a reserved copy to read, because I wasn't sure I wanted to buy it. Then in the mean time, I went over to Haines & Essicks book store and asked if they had a copy, and they showed it to me. I opened it up and instantly I knew it was a masterpiece.

Reynolds: And you studied the book and you're very impressed with the factual nature of it.

Schilling: He did give me recognition for helping him.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: A little bit.

Reynolds: What part of Oglesby's life did he ask you about with regard to the book?

Schilling: Well, of course I didn't know the Governor; he died in 1899. But I knew Mrs. Oglesby. I saw her many times; I never did talk with her. I'd see her riding with her chauffeur out through the country, visiting her farms.

Reynolds: Let's talk about the Oglesby family. Now the connections go back to Elkhart. So let's just open this up with you describing your connections to the family.

Schilling: Governor Oglesby, after he served his third term as Governor of Illinois, moved to Elkhart from Lincoln in 1889, built a very nice house on the site of the first white settlement. He used the fireplace of the Latham home for his home he built, then lived in that home until March 2, 1891 when it burned.

Reynolds: '91. His family

Schilling: 1891.

Reynolds: 1891. Right.

Schilling: He retired from the third term as Governor in 1889 and his father-in-law, John Gillett died in 1888. In 1890, beginning January first, Governor Oglesby kept a daily diary and I have a copy of it. Daily diary.

Reynolds: Now tell us how you acquired that.

Schilling: Joanne Forrest is a historian at the Oglesby mansion and somehow she secured a copy and she gave it to me.

Reynolds: And what has been your involvement with the mansion there in Decatur? Have you been on the board there?

Schilling: No, I was there when they opened it up. The Macon County Conservation District owns it now. It was a house that had been run down, run down bad. And the Conservation District bought it from the Frank E. Evans family

Reynolds: There was a company that was using it, wasn't it?

Schilling: Well, they had a grain elevator business office in there.

Reynolds: Right.

Schilling: And I think, I'm not sure about the date of it, but they restored it and we had some very knowledgeable people who worked real hard. Mr. Linley Hurtt was one of them. Martha Montgomery, who was very much involved in the historical society, helped restore it. It's put back – as much as we know possible – the way it was built in 1874. Now you saw it.

Reynolds: Yes, I did.

Schilling: Beautiful place.

Reynolds: Very impressive.

Schilling: Beautiful place.

Reynolds: Let's get back to your family's connection to the Oglesby family.

Schilling: In 1899 the Governor died. Well, in the first place, after the house he built on the site of the first white settlement burned, they built this big forty-room mansion. I've got the picture of it here –I can show you – on Elkhart hill. My father had two sisters, Aunt Sarepta Leftwin and Aunt Mary Schilling Van Fossan. Aunt Serepta was a maid in the Oglesby home at the time of the governor's death in 1899.

Reynolds: During what years?

Schilling: 1889, when the Governor died.

Reynolds: Okay.

Schilling: And she told me many times of her visits with the Governor. He was advanced in age and she'd say, Mrs. Oglesby, I've done all my work today; what do you want me to do? She'd say, Go down to the library and talk with the Governor; he's lonesome. She'd go down and talk with him for maybe an hour and he'd tell her about his experiences in Kentucky. I asked Aunt Sarepta if she'd like to do a taped conversation; she said she would, but I'm sorry I never got around to it.

Reynolds: Ooh.

Schilling: She died at age ninety-seven.

Reynolds: Do you recall any of those stories that the Governor told her?

Schilling: He used sort of a drawl, I guess. One of the stories he tells – when he's nine years old, I think it was... And, by the way, I did write the chapter for the Macon County history book for Governor Oglesby; it has some errors. But anyway, he liked to tell a story of when his parents died and two siblings died with cholera and that's when he decided to come to Decatur. But in the settlement of the estate of his parents there was a slave named Uncle Tim. And he loved Uncle Tim. He told Uncle Tim when he left: Someday when I grow up I'm going to come back and buy you and free you. And he did.

Reynolds: Did he?

Schilling: Yes. He'd tell that story. He loved to tell that story. He went back and when Uncle Tim saw him coming he said, My Lord, my God, my little boy!

Reynolds: He was a strong abolitionist.

Schilling: Oh, yes, yes. Later on Governor Oglesby had four children by his second marriage. The first one was Felicity, a girl, born in about 1875. They were married in 1874. See, Governor Oglesby first wife, Anna White, died while he was in his first term as governor in the mansion here in Springfield. Then he remarried. He came back to Decatur after the first

term with his children and then he married the second Mrs. Oglesby, Emma Gillett Keays, a widow, on the Elkhart Hill home of her parents, during his second term.

Reynolds: Second term. Okay.

Schilling: Then you see, if you remember the history of Oglesby, he served only a few days in his second term and then he became a United States senator. Before that, he had fought in the Mexican War; Cerro Gordo Street and Eldorado Street are named by Governor Oglesby. I'm backing up a little bit. In 1849, he and a group of men from Decatur – one of them was Mr. Peddicord, a brother-in-law – they went to the California Gold Rush. Spent ninety-one days on the road. Came back a very wealthy man with five thousand dollars. Then he decided that he liked to travel, so he did a year's tour of European countries. And came back and got married to Anna White, had four children. For first term of Governor he was to be inaugurated – I think like January the tenth – but the inauguration was postponed because little Dickie, three years old, had diphtheria and died. So his inauguration was postponed. Then he stayed in Decatur and then he became a second-term Governor in 1872.

Reynolds: Any Lincoln-related stories that your relatives passed on?

Schilling: Well, going back. After the Governor died in 1899, Mrs. Oglesby and her daughter, Felicity, would spend the winters in Rome. They'd go to Rome, and then they'd be back in the summertime. Again, in Mrs. Oglesby's older years – it would be the 1920's – my Aunt Mary Schilling VanFossan would serve as a cook and a maid for them. She knew Mrs. Oglesby very, very well.

Reynolds: In the mansion, yeah.

Schilling: Mrs. Oglesby died in November 28, 1928, and at that time Felicity had been married in 1924 to a Count in Italy. I always like to say his name. His name was Count Alessandro Cenci Bolognetti. Felicity, when she died, was buried in Rome. Then they had John who served as Lieutenant Governor with Governor Lowden, and Richard died young. I didn't know him, but I knew John Oglesby. They had Jasper, the baby. John Oglesby: after Mrs. Oglesby died in 1928, he met a widow in Springfield named Mrs. Sarah Augusta Smith and he married her in 1929. In the meantime he had renovated that beautiful home on Elkhart Hill. Mrs. Smith, his new bride, had a German maid named Lena Carrel. Well, he needed a cook so he kept thinking: Where do I get a cook? My grandparents VanFossan lived on a farm owned by Oglesby southeast of Cornland. My grandfather died September the first 1926 on the Oglesby farm. And, so my grandmother: the only thing she could claim was nine living children, that was about all she had (chuckles). So she came to Decatur as a maid in a home for a family named Burns. Well, John Oglesby had eaten many a meal at my grandparents' home and knew that my grandmother could cook. So somehow he learned of Grandmother's availability and he came

to Decatur to see Grandmother in October of 1929 with his new bride and met in the Hotel Orlando. At that time he offered her a position as cook. All she did was cook. She cooked and received twelve dollars a week and her board and room. And she stayed there almost, I think, maybe seven or eight years.

Reynolds: The home in Elkhart, on the hill.

Schilling: And that is the reason that we got very well acquainted. Well, of course, we were in school with the grandchildren. And we saw John Oglesby at the Post Office every morning. We saw his half brother Mr. Hiram Keays every morning at the Post office. But we were free to visit Grandmother any time we wanted to.

Reynolds: So you spent many times in the mansion, then.

Schilling: I was sixteen years old in 1930 and I wasn't well, so I'd go up and spend the whole day with Grandmother. In 1929, Grandmother asked John Oglesby if it would be alright if we could come and spend New Year's Eve with her. So my twin brother Ray and my mother spent New Year's Eve 1929 at the Oglesby home.

Reynolds: 1929.

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Wow.

Schilling: And Lena, the maid, showed us the home. Oh, what a home it was. What a home. It was beautiful. You see, not only did we know the Oglesby family, we knew all the – you might say – the dignitaries. The senators came and visited. One of the things I can remember in high school, frequently we would see a private railway car on the siding of the railroad, and they'd be up visiting at Elkhart Hill – John Oglesby, the governor's son.

Reynolds: Can you tell us a little bit about your perspective on Oglesby as a politician? Since you've read his diaries, and I'm sure you've studied him quite a good deal, what can you tell me about him?

Schilling: In reading Dr. Plummer's book I learned something I didn't really know, and that is, Oglesby didn't always win elections.

Reynolds: Yeah.

Schilling: He didn't win all of them, but he won a good many of them. Mrs. Jane Johns, an early pioneer of Decatur, wrote a history of Decatur in 1909; she said, Richard J. Oglesby was Decatur's most distinguished citizen. And I think he was. He was loved by everybody. No, not everybody; he had his enemies. His worst enemy was one of his brothers-in-law. (both chuckle) Won't go into that, but it's a well known fact; I'm not telling any stories. It's a well known fact. His name was Littler.??

Reynolds: Oh, is that right. And what's the story on him?

Schilling: Well, let's see, I don't know if I can tell it or not. They wanted to put some murals or something in the new state house and Oglesby was the Governor when they started the Capitol. And they wanted him to be recognized.

Reynolds: The new Capitol?

Schilling: Yeah. And they wanted him to be recognized and Littler was dead against it and he fought and fought and fought against it.

Reynolds: Oh, is that right.

Schilling: That's all in the book. I'm not telling any stories.

Reynolds: Right. Right. Now I know that you got involved with a campaign to make sure that Governor's Oglesby was recognized at the Museum [Abraham Lincoln Presidential Museum]. You want to tell us a little bit about that or?

Schilling: Yes and no. (chuckles) When I came to visit the Museum two times, I could not find any recognition of Oglesby, the person responsible for naming Lincoln the Rail Splitter President.

Reynolds: You want to tell that story?

Schilling: Well I think it's alright to tell. I don't think Dr. [Thomas F.] Schwartz [Illinois State Historian at the Museum] will care.

Reynolds: No. Let's put it in historical perspective here. Tell the story of Oglesby's role in giving Lincoln that particular name. That became a political slogan, obviously, of his campaign.

Schilling: It was in May 10, 1860, the Republican State Convention was being held in Decatur. Lincoln, the first year he was in Decatur, had split a lot of rails. Oglesby knew that. So he took Lincoln's cousin, John Hanks, and went out to the Lincoln farm near Harristown and brought back a couple of rails by horse and buggy. At the appropriate time he and John Hanks went marching down the aisle and they had Lincoln, the Rail Splitter President, and that's how it caught on.

Reynolds: So you felt that was important enough event, because that stuck with Lincoln, obviously, and Plummer wrote an entire book under the title of that.

Schilling: He was known as the Rail Splitter President. Reynolds: Yeah, well.

Schilling: I don't think Dr. Schwartz will care if I tell it. When I came over to join John McClarey for the dedication of the statue in August of 2006, I was there. I thought: Well, I'd like to talk with Dr. Schwartz, but he left before I got a chance to see him so I talked with [Springfield] Mayor Davlin and his assistant, Jim Donelan, and I told them I'm just a little bit concerned – I hope I'm telling right, but I don't want to offend anybody. I told them: I'm not criticizing, but I'm concerned. Mr. Donelan said: Here's my telephone number, I want you to call me; I'm going to come to Decatur. So he did, and we began to figure out how we could get Oglesby

recognized. We had a luncheon meeting at the Oglesby Mansion with eighteen people present.

Reynolds: State Reps?

Schilling: State Representatives, they weren't there, but they were represented, the Oglesby mansion people, officers, we had the historical society people, we had Kim Bauer, Mark Sorenson and the assistant mayor, city manager. But the plan we had did not take place because, in the previous week I had met at the Retired Teachers Luncheon, all the legislators, one of them being Senator Bill Brady. And I talked to him about it and he said: Give me your telephone number and address. So I had a letter from his assistant who said she had talked to Dr. Schwartz and he didn't think he could do that.

Reynolds: What did you want to accomplish, just some sort of recognition of that particular event?

Schilling: I just wanted Governor Oglesby to be recognized as the author of Lincoln, the Rail Splitter President. That's all.

Reynolds: Just recognition.

Schilling: So anyway, then on Tuesday after that meeting of the Retired Teachers, Senator Brady called me and he said that he had talked with Dr. Schwartz and Dr. Schwartz was going to call me. Dr. Schwartz called me the next day and I talked with him. He said: Well, I don't know whether we can do that or not; there's so many people who had connections with Lincoln we can't focus upon all of them. And I said: I know, but is there anyone who you think was closer to Lincoln than Oglesby? He said: Maybe not. He finally said: We have two kinds of exhibits: one is a permanent one and one is a temporary one. We do have a permanent exhibit with Lincoln's rail and we have Governor Oglesby's speech of his dedication of the tomb. (Governor Oglesby had served as the chairman of the commission to build the tomb.) Going back, Governor Oglesby was in Washington at the time of the assassination and made all the arrangements for the funeral. So anyway, Dr. Schwartz couldn't have been nicer, couldn't have been nicer. After two or three telephone conversations, he said: Well, I believe we can do it. I said: That's all we want.

Reynolds: And so what exactly happened? Did they put a plaque up?

Schilling: I called Dr. Schwartz – I think on a Monday in October a year ago – and he said: I just finished a letter to you with a copy to Senator Brady and I'll mail it this evening. I said: Save your postage; I'm coming to Springfield tomorrow; I'd like to talk with you. He was very, very gracious, very gracious, and he said: I'd like to talk with you, too. So I said: How will I see you? He said: Well, you come in to the Library, not the Museum; there will be two guards there. You tell them who you are and they'll bring you to my office. We had a wonderful visit; he couldn't have been nicer. I think it was very interesting because Dr. Schwartz had a friend named James Hickey who had been the Lincoln curator at the Old State Capitol



for years. He asked me if I knew James Hickey and I said; Well, we grew up across the field from each other.

Reynolds: In Elkhart.

Schilling: Yes. James is now deceased, but he served many years. James was a noted Lincoln scholar. He even visited some of the family back in Vermont. Well, James is deceased now, but anyway, Dr. Schwartz said that they would do it. All they did was just – they already had in the display cases – it said Lincoln was the Railsplitter President, but it didn't say who did it. Now if you go to the Museum –and I've seen it – you go in where it's the campaign and it's up on the wall; it's not down, it's up on the wall.

Reynolds: It's in the display case on the wall.

Schilling: It's beautiful. It made the Oglesby Mansion people very happy; it made the Macon County historical people very happy; everybody is very happy.

Reynolds: Governor Oglesby got his recognition.

Schilling: I give all the credit to Dr. Schwartz.

Reynolds: That's a great story. Anything else you'd like to say about the Oglesby legacy, stories, the particular diaries that you had, what period of time did they cover? Was there anything interesting in those diaries?

Schilling: John Oglesby died in 1938 and after that the home was pretty well closed up. Jasper had two sons by a first marriage: Richard and John. Richard's first wife was Marjorie Lanterman of Elkhart. She is the one who inherited the Oglesby Mansion and she only lived there in the summertime. It went down hill, down hill, down hill. And finally about – I don't know what year – but a man named Merle Welsh bought the estate from Mrs. William Drake who was the Governor's step granddaughter.

Reynolds: Who is attached to the Drake Hotel [in Chicago, IL].

Schilling: Mrs. Drake married to Bill Drake whose father and uncle were owners of the Drake Hotel. Yes. Mrs. Oglesby had been married to a man named Hiram Keays; he was killed by a horse accident, and had one son named Hiram. And he had three children: Elizabeth who married Bill Drake, Susan who married Robert Green in Missouri, and John. Susan is the youngest one. Merle Welsh bought the home and cleared the timber which is very upsetting to the village people, but he has established a suburb, you might say. He was able to get his land, about ninety-seven acres, annexed to the city of Elkhart. Now he sells lots up there, beautiful homes. On the Oglesby ground which is called Oglehurst there's a beautiful home there. Another very important thing is that concrete bridge, the arch bridge.

Reynolds: By the cemetery there?

Schilling: That bridge was built in 1915 by Mrs. Oglesby in memory of her only brother, John Gillett, and it joined the Oglesby front yard with the cemetery. Of course, you know that the governor is buried in the

mausoleum. I looked up the Internet and of course, time passes, but what was said on the internet about that mausoleum was not what is up-to-date. In the mausoleum today are buried the Governor and Mrs. Oglesby, Richard, a son and...

Reynolds: Richard was the Lieutenant Governor?

Schilling: No. John was the Lieutenant Governor. Governor and Mrs. Oglesby; Richard, a brother of John Oglesby; and then John Oglesby and his widow; they're buried there. Felicity is buried in Rome and Jasper is buried in the old Latham cemetery.

Reynolds: Anything else on Oglesby before we move on?

Schilling: Well, like I say we were in school with the two Oglesby grandsons.

Reynolds: What was your sense of him as a politician and as a leader during that period since you've studied him a little bit? Anyway you would characterize him?

Schilling: Well, I think from what I read, he must have been a very much loved man and successful in his business of governor three times. Until Governor Thompson served four terms, [actually 3-1/2 terms because of the change of election schedule] he was the only one that had served three terms.

Reynolds: And they weren't consecutive which is even more...

Schilling: I knew Richard Oglesby, the grandson; I knew his first and second wives. I've had lunch with the second wife near Taylorville at a home out in the country. Richard Oglesby was Jasper's son, Richard. Richard had twin daughters. I am a friend of the Governor's great-granddaughter, Yolanda Knight, the daughter of Richard by his second marriage. She came down from Glenview, Illinois when she learned that I knew her father and spent two nights at my home. We talked about the Oglesby family. It's an interesting subject.

Reynolds: Any other famous people you've had encounters with over the years? Or that you can recall?

Schilling: You want to hear all that?

Reynolds: Well, as much as you want to share.

Schilling: I've been very fortunate. I've been at the right place at the right time. Yeah. I came to Springfield with my parents and my twin brother Ray to see President Hoover. I loved history so we saw President Hoover. I did not see Roosevelt. I saw Eisenhower twice; I attended church with him in Washington 1956.

Reynolds: What were the circumstances there?

Schilling: I was there for the Association of Childhood Education International conference. I went to the Presbyterian Church and President and Mrs. Eisenhower were there and Roy Rogers and Dale Evans were there too.

Reynolds: Oh, Roy Rogers and Dale Evans? [a famous movie couple, Western singers]

Schilling: Yes, they were there. And I remember when the service was over they took Roy Rogers and Dale Evans out of church first, and then they brought out President and Mrs. Eisenhower. I saw John Kennedy in Springfield. I shook hands with President Carter's wife in the Holiday Inn in Decatur.

Reynolds: Just chance meetings for the most part or you were there for events when they were here?

Schilling: Mrs. Carter – when President Carter was running – she was in Decatur and she was at the Holiday Inn. After church I went out and I ran into her when I was in the motel and had a visit with her. I didn't see the President Carter. I saw Gerald Ford. I saw Reagan.

Reynolds: During appearances in Decatur for the most part?

Schilling: Well, yes. I didn't see the elder Bush, [George H. W. Bush] but I did see our present President [George W. Bush] in Lincoln.

Reynolds: Any thoughts about those presidents in particular? Did you have favorites?

Schilling: Again, I said I was at the right place at the right time. Reynolds: I don't sense that you're highly political. Would you call yourself a Republican or a Democrat?

Schilling: I'm a Republican. I voted for one Democratic president.

Reynolds: One Democrat. What Democrat was that?

Schilling: President Johnson.

Reynolds: Oh, Lyndon Johnson.

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: In '64?

Schilling: Yes.

Reynolds: Barry Goldwater was just a little too extreme for you?

Schilling: I was a little scared of him.

Reynolds: Yes. Might have been that mushroom cloud ad?

Schilling: I voted for President Johnson in 1964. In 1967 I again was in Washington for the Association for Childhood Education International and I had been guest at the Indiana breakfast in the Washington Hilton Hotel. Walking down from the Indiana breakfast to the Illinois breakfast I met a woman named Lois Johnson from Nebraska whom I had known many years. And she stopped me and said, Mr. Schilling, I want you to meet someone. And I said Okay. She introduced me to Evelyn Lincoln, her cousin, who was President Kennedy's personal secretary for twelve years. When I got to my breakfast meeting. The delegation of about a hundred from Illinois said; You went where you got a free breakfast! I said: Yes, I did. But why

are you late? And I said: Outside this door is a very famous person and I stopped to talk with her. I told them who it was. Lizzie Johnson, our black teacher from Decatur, jumped up and went out and she brought in Mrs. Lincoln and Lois Johnson. I introduced Lois and she introduced Mrs. Lincoln; and she gave us a nice little greeting. Unbelievably – that was on a Wednesday morning – the next evening in the same, almost identical spot, I shook hands with President Johnson and Mrs. Johnson.

Reynolds: What hotel was this?

Schilling: Washington Hilton.

Reynolds: Washington Hilton, okay.

Schilling: As a result of my meeting Mrs. Lincoln – I made no effort to keep in touch with her – but she would write me letters, she'd call me on the telephone and talk about a campaign. She'd always say: I want you to come to visit me. She was very free to talk about her relationship with the President Kennedy. She managed President Kennedy's office for twelve years. So, anyway, in 1991 when our church choir was going to Washington DC, my minister, Dr. Nichols was going to speak at the National City Christian Church, I went with the choir; I don't sing. I called Mrs. Lincoln and said I was coming to Washington and I'd like to have dinner with her. She said: Fine, I'll make arrangements. I told her I was at the Washington Hilton she said she'd make arrangements for dinner at Duke Zeibert's restaurant. So I said:, Well, Mrs. Lincoln – I didn't know her husband, I'd never met him – may I bring someone with me? She said that would be delightful. So in May of 1991 we met her and her husband at Duke Zebra's restaurant. I took with me a young man named Scott Critchfield and his future bride. They were not engaged, but that weekend they became engaged. We sat and talked with Mrs. Lincoln and Dr. Lincoln for about three hours.

Reynolds: Any interesting stories about Kennedy, or did she just talk about herself?

Schilling: Well, no. She and her husband grew up in Nebraska. She was a volunteer for President Kennedy. When she wanted to volunteer for some of the congressmen she chose President Kennedy because she said she knew he'd be the President some day. I did see President Nixon in Decatur, too. President Nixon's secretary, whose name I can't remember, and Mrs. Lincoln used to argue about which one was going to be the President.

Reynolds: I think her name was Wood. She's the one that erased the...

Schilling: Erased the tapes in the Watergate trial?

Reynolds: Yes.

Schilling: So anyway we sat there and she talked about the President's assassination in Dallas.

Reynolds: Was she there?

Schilling: I hesitate to tell you all she told me. It was sad. It was sad.

Reynolds: Don't want to tell the story?

Schilling: I don't know whether I should or not. Well, it's a true story. She said she rode with the President's body back to Washington.

Reynolds: Was she in a car behind the President?

Schilling: No, she wasn't with him in the motorcade

Reynolds: She wasn't in the motorcade.

Schilling: She refused entrance to the hospital. But what she told me was that on that plane coming back to Washington it was one grand party, The Johnson party laughed, they talked; they were so happy."

Reynolds: Hmmm. That is an interesting.

Schilling: The Johnsons.

Reynolds: Yes. Interesting.

Schilling: She said they laughed all the way to Washington.

Reynolds: Did she have an opinion about the assassination and who was involved?

Schilling: No. We didn't talk it.

Reynolds: She never had an opinion about that.

Schilling: No. But you know, again, I hesitate. On the surface, the Johnson's and the Kennedy's got along pretty well, but not really. I think everybody knows that, don't they?

Reynolds: Yes.

Schilling: I remember in the Democratic Convention I watched all the time in, I think it was San Diego, I believe.

Reynolds: Could be San Francisco, but that's alright.

Schilling: No, it was...

Reynolds: Are we talking about when Kennedy was nominated?

Schilling: 1960.

Reynolds: Oh, 1960, that might have been Chicago.

Schilling: No, it was San Diego.

Reynolds: San Diego. You got a better memory than me.

Schilling: I believe.

Reynolds: I think the Republican Convention was in Chicago in 1960. You're right.

Schilling: I remember watching and President Kennedy said, "My fellow Americans and Democrats, if you can make me the President and Senator Johnson stays as a senator we will have a great term. We will leave leave Senator Johnson as head of the Senate." Well, this is on tape; I've got a video of this. In the hotel after John Kennedy was nominated, he and Bobby were

in a hotel together with Mrs. Lincoln. I've got a tape of it. They said, "Who will we have for Vice President?" And after a long pause, Bobby turns and says, "We have no choice; we have to have Johnson."

Reynolds: They needed the State of Texas.

Schilling: And why?

Reynolds: Why?

Schilling: Because Johnson and J. Edgar Hoover were close friends. If th Kennedy's didn't take Johnson, J. Edgar Hoover [legendary Director of the FBI] would expose Kennedy's womanizing. That's a true story.

Reynolds: I think I have heard references to that. Although I guess I had never understood how close Johnson and Hoover were maybe.

Schilling: Very, very close.

Reynolds: But I knew there was a lot of ...

Schilling: They were inseparable.

Reynolds: Yes. Interesting.

Schilling: Well, I told some stories that maybe I shouldn't have told.

Reynolds: No, these are interesting.

Schilling: But I have had a great life.

Reynolds: You have received some awards recently. Would you like to talk about those? Anything in particular?

Schilling: You know, I hesitate doing this because I don't want to sound boastful. But I've been very fortunate. You see, when you grow old, I've learned this much. There are two times in life that one gets a lot of attention, one is when he's born and when he's an old man. (both chuckle) Approximately three years ago I had contacted the Executive secretary of the Association for Childhood Education International in Washington. I had not had any contact in a number of years. And in talking with him – I'd never met him – we became acquainted. His name is Dr. Gerald Odland. Finally he called me and said: We are going to honor you. I said: What do you mean, honor me? He said: Well, we're having our conference in Arizona and we are going to give you an award. I said: What? He said: We're going to give you a certificate for distinguished service to the association. So I got that.

Reynolds: How many years with that particular organization?

Schilling: I'd been with them for approximately twenty-five years.

Reynolds: Twenty-five years. Now you've won some local awards, too.

Schilling: Well, anyway, he gave me that and then I have been given awards from the historical society. Just yesterday at the museum, the historical society, we had a big meeting and three people were being honored for service. One was Mary Heckert for whom the gift shop was named. I have a

picture of Rosemary Donahue, a fellow teacher; she and I have our names posted as the Rosemary Donahue and Roy Schilling Gallery. We're going to have all these galleries displaying local history events. About three years ago – I have been very much involved in Illinois State University, I love – I think it was 2003 – I was inducted into the Hall of Fame in the College of Education..

Reynolds: Illinois State University Hall of Fame.

Schilling: Yeah. Here it is. Two years ago, three years ago, I guess it was, I was a Homecoming King of Illinois State University.

Reynolds: I bet that was fun, huh?

Schilling: That was more fun. I'd been invited to serve in the parade this year as former Homecoming King, but I can't because I'm going to be gone on my trip. Then just last February, unexpectedly a man named Bill Haibich called me, and said: I have something I want to talk with you about that might interest you. I knew him to be a great fundraiser, so I thought: Well, he's going to ask me for a contribution. But, no, he called me and came to see me. He said: We used to give an award to someone from the Sertoma club every year and you've been selected to be given the Service of Mankind award. I said: You've got the wrong man. He said: No, we know who you are. So last February 24<sup>th</sup> at Central Christian Church, in the presence of one hundred and fifteen people, we had a big dinner and I was given that award.

Reynolds: Congratulations.

Schilling: They just keep coming.

Reynolds: Any other memories you want to talk about that we haven't covered. Have we covered the waterfront, you think, on your life? Are there other areas?

Schilling: Last night a very good friend of mine who is a widow of my very good friend from childhood called; all of her memories are sad, sad, sad. My memories are nothing but pleasant, pleasant. My family, my parents, my wife, my children, my grandson, my son-in-law, my fellow teachers, superintendents of schools. You see, I always say that you do not succeed without the help of a lot of people. So Mr. Lukenbill, Logan County Superintendent of Schools, took me up to Emden; then he had a good friend who was Lincoln superintendent named D.F. Nichols and I got a job teaching in Lincoln. The first time I ever felt like I got a job on my own merit was when I took the job in Oregon; Dr. Maaske, the president, invited me to become a teacher. In Wisconsin it was Dr. Newlin and River Forest it was Dr. Birt. And in Decatur which is probably the highlight of my career, Lester Grant who was Assistant Superintendent and Charlotte Meyer, the assistant in charge of elementary schools employed me. And so I have nothing but pleasant memories.

Reynolds: Just to wrap this thing up. If you think we covered everything we need to cover...

Schilling: It seems like it.

Reynolds: Any advice?

Schilling: I just hope and pray that what I've said is not offending anybody or...

Reynolds: I don't think so. I didn't notice anything.

Schilling: I hope not. I've been so fortunate.

Reynolds: Any advice you'd like to give your grandchildren or all of us young people?

Schilling: My father said to us four boys, "I don't care how smart you are, or how much you know, if you don't know how to get along with people you're not going to make it. You cannot have too many friends, not because they can do something for you, just for fellowship and love." I've had countless friends, countless friends; old and young. And that's what I'm passing on to my children. So many of my friends are gone. Again, I always felt a friend made once is a friend for life. So I went to college in 1933 and I was assigned to share a room with a young man named Herbert Behrens, the son of a Lutheran minister. We had nothing in common, but we got along very well and we remained closer and closer friends until he died. He lived in New Jersey –he died in about 2001 – and he'd come with his wife every year to see me. And so, friendships are very important.

Reynolds: That's great.

Schilling: I tell my children and I think so far they are doing pretty well.

Reynolds: Well it has been a pleasure talking to you, Roy. And again, I hope we've covered all the important events of your life and you are a treasure.

Schilling: I don't, I just can't tell you how much I appreciate it you.

Reynolds: It's been a pleasure. Thank you.

(end of interview #2)