

Interview with Walter Zaida

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Interviewer: Phil Pogue

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Pogue: My name is Philip Pogue. This is the Community College Oral History Project for the oral history department of the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library. We're at Joliet Junior College. It's April 22, 2013, and we're going to be talking to an individual who was involved with the community college from its early days. So, would you start by giving us your name and background?

Zaida: Alright, I'm Walter Zaida. I have been an employee, here at Joliet Junior College. I shouldn't say *since*, but I started in 1954, and I retired in 1986. I have a B.S. and M.S. in ag [agricultural] education from the University of Wisconsin. I also had a sabbatical and a year's leave of absence, at which time I spent those years at UCLA [University of California at Los Angeles], under a Kellogg fellowship, studying with B. Lamar Johnson and his crew there and getting brought up-to-date on what's happening in the world of junior colleges on the west coast.

Pogue: What has been your past involvement with community colleges, before Joliet?

Zaida: Well, essentially nothing. I came directly from [the] University of Wisconsin. The only thing that Wisconsin had that was comparable was that my first year in college was at Green Bay Extension Center, which is Wisconsin's version of the community college movement. It was freshman and sophomore year, and we operated in temporary buildings there at that time.

Pogue: What have been your responsibilities at Joliet?

Zaida: Well, I've had quite a progression. I should mention that my first years were at the high school, and my only contact with the junior college, for the time that I worked at the high school, was through my home room classes. When we had seniors who were very good students, we very frequently would assign them or they would enroll in community college classes. So I would have to do a little research and find out the kinds of opportunities they had and put them in the junior college classes. That was my only contact with the college, other than watching what was going on and seeing students in the hallways and things of that sort.

From that point on, I joined the staff of the college in '61, and I started with the title of assistant to the dean. At that time, I became the fourth administrator at the junior college. The responsibilities for working with the board all fell with the high school superintendent and his staff, and the dean of the college reported directly to the high school superintendent. So we didn't need quite as many administrators as we do now, with our own trustee group.

I was, at that time, one of the advisors for the ag students, seeing that they got started right and got into the right classes and all the other things you do as an advisor to students. I met with the student group, walked through our discussions of the ways we should change things and the opportunities we should create and things of that sort. So there was some planning involved and consultation with the president in our regular meetings.

But my real job was the director of student activities. Other than the last item in your job description—"other duties as assigned"—I spent most of my time working directly with the students, for the first seven years of my career at Joliet Junior College, a very delightful time. I could tell many stories about that, maybe [I] will a little later on. But right now, I want that to be the introduction that I had to Joliet Junior College and its student body.

Following that time, after my leave of absence, I came back and was the dean of student services. I later picked up, because I had some knowledge of the computer world, I picked up director of information services and student services. We were in a period of converting the student records system to the computer and all of those things. I was instrumental in getting that going.

Later on, because of a resignation of an individual and the president at that time wanting to do some shuffling, I became the VP [vice president] for academic affairs. Actually, I held both positions; I was VP for academic affairs and student services, at the time.

Then, just a year and a half before I retired, I served for about a year as the interim president. So, I had a full picture of what it takes to operate a community college.

Pogue: How did Joliet become the first junior college in the United States?

Zaida: Well, let me go back to my ag background. I think the seed, the idea, the concept of the community college fell on fertile ground, and it was nurtured, cultivated and brought to a point where transplanting began to occur into other communities.

Specifically, Joliet, at that time, back near the turn of the century, was a bustling community. It had been in existence from charter, since about fifty years, and was 30,000 or so in population. It was a population made up largely of, well, first or second generation immigrants, coming from all over the middle of the European continent.

You could tell by the churches that existed in Joliet, where they were from. They came from Greece; they came from Italy; they were immigrants from England, they were immigrants from Slovenia, all across the continent, and they were lovers of education. They had already created a city school that was remarkable in its nature.

Well, actually, if I went to the book, I found that the first president, or the first chairman of the high school board, was Judge A.O. Marshall. I knew of A.O. Marshall, because the school named after him was right next to where I started working. But the first president of the board had a saying that he was quoted on many times, that “Good teachers make good schools.”

If you looked at the faculty at Joliet High School, which was a city high school at that time, they not only came from the University of Illinois, but they came from the universities of Michigan, Minnesota, Wisconsin, across the Midwest, along with some of the premier colleges, Lake Forest, Knox, Albion, Wellesley. And so, if good teachers make good schools, Joliet had already created a good school.

The only problem was, they had grown out of it. It was already somewhat aged. I don't know exactly how long, but it was not in the best of repair, and so they needed to advance. At that time, this fertile ground conducted a referendum to expand the district from just the city to the township of Joliet. This was something new that the state had allowed them to do.

So, on the 4th of April 1899, they conducted the referendum that passed by a margin of 8 to 1. Then, two months later, on the 6th of June, 1899, they conducted another referendum that was to cover the cost of purchasing a site and building the school. That one passed by the amazing vote of 1,447 to... Guess how many “no” votes came out of that population. One “no” vote. Can you imagine, in any referendum you've ever heard about, where there was only one “no” vote cast for it? That doesn't even happen in Congress.

So I think that the idea that developed by J. Stanley Brown, who is Dr. Brown, who was the superintendent of the school at that time, in cooperation with William Rainey Harper from University of Chicago, was the seed that fell on fertile ground in Joliet. Now Dr. Brown and William Rainey Harper were colleagues; they had educational contacts before this time period. They also happened, incidentally, to be Baptists who were practicing and attended the annual conferences that were held in Ohio, I believe, at that time.

The story is that they would spend many a night at a conference, talking about their schools and discussing the idea that a lot of the work that is being done in the freshman and sophomore years at the college could just as well be done in the high school, providing it was a good high school. This would work much to the benefit of both the university and the community in which that high school was located. So, the concept of taking some college classes, while you were still living in your home community, grew out of that.

At Joliet, there was a lot of discussion as to exactly when it was started. Did it really start in 1901, or was it some other year? A lot of that centered around the fact that the students were first called postgraduates. They came back in, and they were not college students; they were postgraduates. They were enrolled in some of the classes that were offered, that in reality, were high school classes, but were the advanced level or were new classes that were introduced at the college level.

The success was determined on the basis of whether or not they were given credit when they transferred to the senior college or the university. So a lot of the stories that are told in Susan Wood's book or Dr. Sterling's deal with the successes or the measures of success that the students experienced there.

Pogue: As far as Dr. William Rainey Harper, C.E. Spicer and J. Stanley Brown's view of a junior college, how does it compare with the Joliet Junior College of today?

Zaida: Very similar, with regard to the transfer program, but very different, in regard to its content. The program here, while I'm not that familiar with it, having been out of the college for a number of years, I'm sure it no longer continues to expand on six years of Latin, you know, four in high school and four in the college or a full year's course in Greek and Roman history or physiography. (I had to look up the meaning of physiography to find out what they were teaching.)

At that time, they had only the beginnings of vocational and technical programs. At that time, the normal school operated in conjunction with the high school, but that was just two years of preparatory work for elementary school teachers. That was about the extent of the occupational, technical programs.

Pogue: What ideas did Dr. L. W. Smith bring to the college, and what ones still exist to this day?

Zaida: Well, Dr. Smith was the gentleman who really developed the college into a real college. He served from 1919 to 1928, so there was a lot of nurturing time, prior to his arrival. Incidentally, he then went on to Berkeley in California, so you may get some idea of the stature of the gentleman.

During the time that he was there, from 1919 to 1928, the enrollment grew from ninety students to 108. And during that time, the postgraduates changed their names; they became collegians. In fact, Susan's book talks about the *Blazer* article. The *Blazer* was the student newspaper. It talked about the scientific change from a new breed of creature, wandering the halls, no longer a postgraduate, but now a collegian. So, how did he do that?

Well, Dr. Smith did a couple of things that were most significant, in my mind. He established a portion of the high school building that now became sort of the college center. This included a library, a college library where students, obviously, and hopefully would gather. And during his time, the building itself was expanded, so that they had an opportunity to add considerably to the science labs. The science and engineering labs, through the years that followed Dr. Smith, were often visited by other schools, just to see how they had been put together and the equipment that was there and the like. So that was a significant part of it.

He also added staff members, with specific responsibilities for working with the students. Actually, they were called the Community College Committee. They consisted of Ira Yaggy, who later became a dean of the college, D.R. Henry and A. F. Trams. A. F. Trams was an English instructor. I will mention his name again in another regard, but they were the first people, the first professors who worked directly with the college students, helped them in choosing their courses, with any indications that they had. These three gentlemen were the first people to occupy the college office. They actually had office space provided for them.

I think another thing that he did that I found amazing, he really expanded the extent to which student activities were sponsored there. He did it primarily through the gym classes and through the use of the staff members who worked in that area. For the men, they introduced interscholastic basketball and baseball teams. They were members of the Northern Illinois Junior College Conference. Sometimes there would be a track, tennis or a golf team and quite a list of intramurals.

But I think the most amazing part was the introduction of a considerable array of opportunities for women. The WAA, which was the Women's Athletic Association, was at that time under the direction of Phoebe Henderson Kirby. Phoebe was a grad, a JJC grad. She was one of the

postgraduates in the early years. She returned [and] was still on the staff when I joined them.

When she was there and introduced, under WAA, such things as—and this is for the women now—tennis, track, swimming, folk dancing, interpretive dancing, tap dancing, rifle shooting, horseback riding, and then shuffleboard, volleyball, badminton, golf, bowling and finally, a mother-daughter banquet and a Christmas tea. So, this occurred under Dr. Smith.

Another thing that was a feature that I thought rather important was that, during that time, they continued to judge the work that was being done, as measured by the performance of the students. So, Superintendent Haggard followed up on some of the work that Dr. Smith had initiated. A couple caught my eye, because they were following up JJC grads who had transferred to the University of Illinois, and they did it in a simple fashion. The first one was standard, but the JJC grads achieved a .05 higher grade point average at the U of I than did the Joliet Township classmates, who went to the U of I as freshman, instead of first going to JJC. So, if you went to JJC, you did better than the students from JT [Joliet Township High School], who went directly to the University of Illinois. Not a great deal, but .05 points on a four point system.

Later, I don't think it was Dr. Robert Frisbie, R.L. Frisbie, did a study of his chemistry transfers. He showed that they had a .46 point higher grade point, at the U of I, than was the average grade point at the University of Illinois. So he compared his chemistry transfer students to the overall GPI [grade point index] at the University of Illinois, and it was .46 points higher. This kind of follow-up study was a part of what Dr. Smith had initiated.

Pogue: How did Joliet Township High School work with the junior college?

Zaida: I think very well. Now this is coming from my experience, too, because I operated there for about seven years, with sharing the facilities and all of those things. We shared excellent space and an excellent faculty. The excellent space, I mentioned before, the science labs, especially, were something that served us extremely well.

Also, excellent space in the form of the auditorium and gymnasium. As a matter of fact, those were sizeable. I remember when I walked into that auditorium, the first day of my employment at the high school. I was amazed. It was a faculty meeting, and we met in a 1,900 seat auditorium, with full balcony, tremendous stage capability, and across the ceiling was engraved the words of... Diogenes, the words of Diogenes, "The foundation of every state is the education of its youth." And I thought to myself, here is a community that indeed believes. Maybe it was the Greek heritage of the immigrants, but in my estimation, the institution in the community indeed followed that particular quotation.

The gymnasium was also sizeable. It served both men and women at the time. It had a running track on the top. We held dances there; we spent a long day decorating, creating a false ceiling for it and so on. In short, these facilities were so good that the college today still has not achieved anything comparable to that auditorium or those physical education facilities, which I think is unfortunate. But that was one of the blessings of being in the township high school and still functioning as a community college.

We, of course, competed for space and funding. There was one part of the high school's operation that I thought fed very well, the voc-tech program. The high school vocational-technical programs were very broad in coverage; they were well designed, exceptionally well-staffed, and indeed the whole high school class schedule, the calendar of classes, was on a sixteen unit basis.

In short, it was very flexible. It allowed sophomore or freshman students to be in classes of three periods in length, which was longer. It allowed a lunch period of just twenty-four minutes, plus passing time. So it used the time very effectively. But what it did for voc-tech was that, in your junior and senior year, you could be well taking a voc-tech class that was a half day long. So, if you were in a lab, in an automotive lab, you had plenty of time to get greasy; you had plenty of time to do the work there.

This particular approach to teaching voc-tech in the high school fed very well into the more advanced programs that we then introduced in the college. I consider that to have been a real fortunate situation.

Pogue: In one of the books about Joliet Junior College, it talks about it being "the people's college." What was all that about?

Zaida: Well, I'm not sure how it initiated. I still think that probably J. Stanley Brown may have used that a bit, in talking about the college. In one place, he's quoted as saying, "The biggest factor in choosing between postgrad work at JJC, versus going directly to college at the University of Illinois or wherever, was a financial one." Therefore, a college located near where you were living, funded by local taxes, just as were the grade and high school, really was a people's college. The people of that community were indeed running, supporting financially, their college. So I have a feeling that J. S. Brown was instrumental in using that term to begin with.

But I think, officially, Walter Crosby Eells, in his book, *The Junior College*, advocated the use of the term. I think another thing that suggests it fits is... When I was at the University of California in Los Angeles, they used to talk about the California system in which the top one-fourth of the high school grads were eligible to go to the university, and the top half of the graduating class were eligible to go to the state colleges. Then they would say, and the top 100% of the class are eligible to go to the community college.

That, in a humorous kind of a way, is really saying, that's a people's college; everyone is an eligible student; whatever their needs, we'll try to meet them.

Pogue: How have the wars effected Joliet Junior College?

Zaida: As you might expect, enrollment dropped. It dropped, because a lot of men were called off to the war. The First World War resulted in such a loss of men on campus that J. Stanley Brown was accused of running a female seminary.

Not only did they lose students, especially men students, but they also lost faculty members. Some significant staff names were listed as having gone to serve in the military. World War II was even more of an impact. If you trace through the years, the military draft started in August of '41. The September enrollment at the junior college in '41 was 387. By '42, it had dropped to 213, and, at the middle of the war, in '43, there were only 179 students left at the junior college, mostly women.

In addition to the loss of students and faculty members, the community college began to serve its community. Located in Ellwood, which is within the district and just a few miles from JJC, was an arsenal, the Joliet Ordinance Plant, which through the years, has become commonly termed "the arsenal." [It] was a large section of land that had been confiscated. Well, I shouldn't say confiscated, but they had taken over several sections of land. Local farmers gave up their property. It was sold; they were paid for it. But, indeed, it was a massive thing that occurred, just prior to the outbreak of the war. The government was getting ready for it. But a huge section of our district became kind of a cloistered area, where they were manufacturing ammunition in great amounts.

In the course of that manufacturing at the arsenal, they needed employees. They needed employees who were trained to handle some of the things. So, at that time, three college professors, Eggman, Frisbie and Nelson—and incidentally they too were both on board when I came—were given the task of designing classes that would train workers for the arsenal. There was some chemistry that workers had to know; they had to be able to read gauges, interpret gauges, things of that nature. There were some safety concerns that had to be taught.

Anyway, these three science professors developed the course, developed the class. The classes met eight hours a day, six days a week for twelve weeks and then repeated, with new students. The classes were mostly adults, local citizens—probably older than the average, because the younger people had gone off to war—and largely women. In fact, they cited that one class was entirely made of women.

I've forgotten what they called women who went to work at that time, but it was not unexpected. Housewives suddenly decided it was more

important to go out and help the war effort than to keep the home fires burning. This was the kind of relationship that the college had with its community at that time.

And then, of course, the war effort resulted in basketball being dropped; student activities were reduced in scale. There was no yearbook; they printed a booklet of memories and things of that sort. And I think, maybe a bit of foresight that was demonstrated.

There was a new administrative position created at that time. It was charged with doing two things, evaluating the current curriculum and then doing serious planning for post-war educational leaves. Looking ahead. What is our community going to be looking like? What is our country going to be needing in the years ahead? That was something that was, I think, brought on by the war but was an output that served the institution well.

Pogue: How did domestic issues impact the Joliet Junior College?

Zaida: The Great Depression was probably the one that had the biggest impact and was mentioned in rather detailed fashion in both texts. First the market crash of '29 led to an increase in enrollments. People were out of work; students couldn't go off to work; they came to school.

The increase of enrollment from 1931 over 1930, for instance, was a 46% increase. Although we were relatively small in size at that time, that percentage increase had to be dealt with.

Another thing of a more serious nature was that tax collections dropped off. People could not pay their taxes. Teachers and employees of the college were paid in script. The business community in Joliet accepted that script. They could buy their groceries and supplies and things of that sort and pay for it in the Joliet area with script, which I think is a significant tribute to the Joliet community at that time.

But it meant that school operations had to be curtailed, to the extent that they could afford to do so and still keep the quality of the operation going. To cover some of the costs to do that, the residents were now charged tuition for the first time, \$25 per semester. If you were a non-resident, if you weren't a part of Joliet Township, and you were at JJC, you would be charged \$100 per semester. Plus, there were graduation fees introduced and things of that sort.

During that time, the college received a boost from the Carnegie Grant of \$6,000 for library development. So there were some things that helped ease the crush a little bit. There was another one; the National Youth Act, provided \$4,500 in a grant for tuition assistance, but the tuition assistance was given in the form of student work scholarships. That occurred in 1935.

They were saying, we'll help you out with students. We hope you can... And these work scholarships were work that was being done at the college. So they may have served as teacher aides or things of that sort. It was done within the college, so it helped both the student and the college.

And then, of course, there was the period during which... Well, the War in Vietnam was the key that triggered a good deal of unrest throughout the United States. This was especially true among college students. And Joliet Junior College was not unaware of this. We had rallies going on. There were student clubs. The one, SPI, the "spy" Club. That stood for students for political involvement, I think. But, we had rallies and things of that sort going on. There was especially a great deal of concern when the students were fatally shot at Kent State, during a rally of that sort. There were similar reactions, after the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King.

These were not unusual, and they were community-based. But there was community responsibility involved in it. While you may be protesting and using language that may not have been appropriate throughout the whole area, there was no degree of vandalism or violence going on.

Pogue: What conflicts existed by having the junior college be part of the high school district?

Zaida: The conflicts—I hesitate to use the term conflicts—but yes, there were conflicts. We competed for space as enrollments grew. Student activities, you'd have to schedule your calendar of events a year in advance or else find a place off-campus that you could hold the spring formal. I think the competition for who was going to be placed where and what kind of a division of assets would go on, occurred primarily during the years when the high school was expanding enrollments to form two new campuses. They wanted to develop one on the east side of town and one on the west side, so there would be three, east, west and central.

The question really developed, where does the junior college fit into this? The community was saying, maybe they should be separate, or one segment of the community said, we'd like the community college to stay downtown and questions of that sort. So, as we competed, as we tried to resolve those issues, there were conflicts of sorts. And certainly, with the community beginning to be a significant part of the planning, there were more than educational concerns that were involved in the conflicts.

And, of course, [there was] the apportionment of funds. It's a situation where, even for a while, in the early years of the college, there was no legal basis for collecting funds to run a high school and then also run a community college. Now, that was corrected. I'm not sure of the year, but there was legislation that corrected that particular absence of authorization.

Even so, the community began to wonder why tax rates were particularly higher. I remember citing... Actually I think this was even just about the time J. Stanley Brown left. The local newspaper was saying, "Why is it that Joliet tax rates are higher for its schools than the city of Chicago charges to run their schools?" There was no mention of the fact that a junior college was being run under that same tax rate, as well. But that issue did begin to appear in some of the discussions of what we should do in later years. So, the apportionment of funds would be a source of conflict, as you might expect.

Pogue: How many referendums have you been involved with, as part of the junior college, and what happened to those?

Zaida: There were a lot of referenda that occurred while I was on board. In some cases, my participation was simply voting in them. The first ones of that nature were around the issue of whether Joliet Township should join with Joliet Grade School and become a unit district. There were a couple of referenda of that nature in later years that raised the question of whether a unit district should be formed, not just in Joliet Township but also in a larger portion of Will County, so that you'd have almost a county-wide unit district. There were referenda on that. In those, I was obviously part of the discussion with the troops, but other than that, I was just a voting participant.

I think the one referendum that I participated in to the greatest extent was in 1977, when we were already a Class I community college. In becoming a Class I community college, we had established a tax rate that was modest. It was one of the smallest, if not the smallest, established among community colleges in the state. We were trying to run it on a ten cent, on less than a... In fact, that was the way that earlier referendum was being sold, that we could operate on a dime. That tax rate had been established at seven and one-half cents for operation, instruction, and two cents for building.

But eventually, we found that that wasn't enough. So in 1977, a referendum was established that was sold in a novel way and, I think, a very honest way. It was under the heading or the slogan of "When is a tax increase not a tax increase?" The answer is, "When you vote 'yes' for the junior college referendum." Because the ballot had to be written as such, the ballot said that we are proposing a five cent increase in the educational rate and a two and one-half cent increase in the building rate.

But not included in the wording on the ballot, we had to publicize the idea that the board was promising that the rate would not increase in either of these operating budgets, until a similar decrease would occur in the bonding fund indebtedness. So, as we were paying off the bonds on the new campus that had been built, we would increase the operating rate, proportionately, so there was not really a total tax increase. It was just shifting the money from one area to another, but it had to be done legally, with a referendum.

So the referendum passed, rather favorably, and the board's promises were kept. But in that particular thing, we had committees all over the district. We had speakers going out in the northern part of our district. We had classes where we'd ask for five minutes of time at the beginning of class, to discuss the issue. These were principally adult, voting students at that time. If the instructor permitted, we went in and made the presentation.

One of my colleagues, later, was saying he was rather amazed that he was getting a lot of smiles and nods, as he was presenting the case. Then, when he stepped out into the corridor, the teacher said, "Certainly appreciate this, and if you didn't quite understand why you were so silently and well received, these are Korean students, and they're not very good in English." (both chuckle) But we worked hard on that referendum. I think the case was there to be made, and we made it.

There were other referenda that... Particularly before, there were, I think, a total of three, before we became a Class I community college, that involved raising the rates in order to operate as a part of the high school, that were unsuccessful. In fact, there was one, in response to... The state tried to help, and there was a law passed that would allow a board to raise the rates—in order to operate the junior college—by a particular amount, providing that there was no petition signed within thirty days, containing signature[s] of... I think it was 10% of the voting public that opposed this.

The Joliet Township Board did agree to do this. They agreed to do this budget, I don't know, half a million dollars... I can't remember what the figures were, but budget a substantial amount to be able to operate the junior college for another year, with this extra funding. But, as you might expect, there were some local political figures—I won't mention their names—who came up with a referendum, and this went then to the public. Their campaign was successful, and the high school board was not allowed to raise the rates and support the junior college in that fashion. So that was another one that I participated in, but unsuccessfully. And there were several... There were two more, during that time, that failed before we achieved Class I status.

Pogue: Talking about Class I status, the Junior College Act of 1965 created two classes of junior colleges and is kind of the foundation for the whole junior college system. How did a Joliet move into Class I?

Zaida: This was another major effort on the part of the college. I have to confess that I was not present. This was a situation that developed and occurred while I was at UCLA for those two years. But I followed it by getting a copy of the local paper delivered to me at my residence for a while, and then I was able to follow it through the library at UCLA.

But, the State of Illinois in the Community College Act of '65 created a situation that was so advantageous to going to Class I status that any district

that didn't do it, didn't have their head on right. The Community College Act of '65 provided for 75% of the funding for site and construction costs, plus direct reimbursement for operations of \$11.50 per semester hour.

But then they put a kicker in that, which was, if you didn't do that, if you didn't become a Class I, you would only get \$9.50 per semester hour for the courses that you ran, and you were not eligible for site and construction costs. So how could Joliet Junior College, where we were operating under the high school district and had just lost probably three referenda—if my counting is correct—how could you not make a major effort to become Class I?

The effort was led by two alumni individuals. We had an alumni attorney, Ken Timm, who led the charge, led the committee. We had the banker, alumni banker, John Racich, and working with them was the head of the ag department at JJC and Joliet Township High School, Max Kuster. They were the individuals who started and led the major effort, which first involved identifying the parts of the surrounding area that would want to become a part of Joliet Junior College.

So the first thing they did was send out a proposal to sixteen high school boards and said, "We've had some of your students with us. Are you interested in becoming a part of the Joliet Community College District, under a Class I status? If you are, why don't you send one or two members to represent your community and your point of view to join our planning committee?"

In response to the message to sixteen high school boards, responses came from thirteen. And so they went into doing a lot of discussion, planning. Max Kuster led [a] research and information survey, which gathered information on the populations, the patterns of growth that were expected within these districts, the financial basis that they operated under and then began to put these things together in a proposal for Class I status.

The final proposal that was put forth was for twelve high school districts in Will, Kendall, Grundy Counties, plus small portions of a couple of districts in Kankakee and LaSalle Counties. They proposed a tax rate for this Class I junior college of seven and one-half cents for operations and two cents for buildings. The board approved this proposal; the board of the high school approved the proposal, and the vote on the 18th of February, 1967, passed on a four to one ratio. So the Class I college was launched at that time.

And then, to finalize the taking over, in April of '67, from a field of thirty-five candidates, the first seven member board of Joliet Junior College was elected. It consisted of William Glasscock as chairman, Dr. Cecil Ingmire, a veterinarian, as vice chairman; Ron Whitaker in insurance business as secretary; Sam Saxon, an attorney from Plainfield; Dan Kennedy, a Joliet attorney; Victor Scott in real estate, living in Plainfield Township; and Al

Holler, a farmer from Mazon, I believe. They took over operation of the college in August of '67.

They started out by paying one \$140,000 to continue to rent Joliet Township facilities, because we didn't have any facilities yet. We also rented the Boys Club, across the street from the high school, which became the student center. And, at that time, Elmer W. Rowley was officially appointed the first president of Joliet Junior College, now an Illinois Class I junior college.

Pogue: Going further about the Junior College Act of '65, you talked about how it moved Joliet to Class I, and it provided funding for operations and buildings. What else did it do to help the college?

Zaida: (pause) Some of the other things that grew out of the College Act of '65 was a truly state system of community colleges. So we began to operate under decisions made that were designed to coordinate the kinds of things that the community colleges did and to do so in sensible and reasonable ways.

One of the things, for instance, we weren't allowed to expand our curriculum haphazardly or any way we wanted to. There were guidelines that needed to be followed. You had to gain approval of the community college board for some major addition. I don't mean courses; I just mean major divisions of instruction, especially when you're getting into the technical part of it.

The situation was... Well, for example, one of the things that one of our trustees was a big advocate for was introducing vet tech to our ag program. He thought this was something that was much needed. This was an area where individuals could be trained, not to be veterinarians but could be trained to assist in the practice. There were individuals who could work as technicians in the veterinary arena.

The ag department itself, I think maybe in the form of Max Kuster, had some other ideas for areas they wanted to grow that were kept ahead of vet tech, in their mind. So we had a little, within the institution, discussion of how hard we should push for it. The long and short of it was that the community college people in Springfield looked at the situation and said, this is a program, if we're going to start it within the state, really belongs at Parkland Community College. They're right next door to the University of Illinois. This is where the vet school is; this is where the science part of vet tech will be readily available, and so the vet tech program will be allowed at Parkland. It will not be allowed in Joliet. And that made sense.

It, maybe, disappointed vet Doc Ingmire, but as things went along, vet tech started and grew at Parkland. Then, a generation later, it also developed at Joliet Junior College. Now, these were the kinds of things that the Act

helped develop a community college system that made sense. Also a part of that was the establishment of [fees].

Staying with vet tech, as an example, if we had a student who was in the southern part of our district and wanted to go to Parkland to take the vet tech class at Parkland, Joliet Junior College would be paying the out-of-district portion of the tuition that was charged at Parkland, so that the sharing of curricula were quite possible. This was especially convenient, if you were kind of in a metropolitan area where community colleges were within commuting distance, so that programs could be logically placed, and there would be enough student support, faculty and things of that sort too to keep the programs well run and with plenty of students and graduates to prove their worth.

Pogue: How were the assets divided between the junior college and the high school, once the division came up and Joliet Township High School was no longer involved with the junior college?

Zaida: The division of assets was a little difficult to achieve, just on the basis of what we were being asked to do. It's like, I bake the cake; you supply the eggs, and I supplied everything else. How many pieces of the cake do you get?

The funding, for the most part, all came from Joliet Township citizens, except in later years, when some of the funding became more significant from out-of-district students, from other sources. Did that funding come to the high school or to the college? Well, as far as the treasurer of District #204 was concerned, Joliet Township was the place where the funds went into the pool. By the budgeting process, that's where the funds for the junior college came from. So how much of that belonged to which institution?

So there were issues that were difficult to work out, in that fashion. However, there was a feeling of goodwill between the institutions. The community college employed an accounting firm. James J. Grumley and Associates were hired by the junior college board. They worked with the business manager of Joliet Township High School, to work out the division of the assets that was to the satisfaction of both boards.

About the only thing that I remember that was of major significance in the division of assets was that the total library, the books and furnishings, that was the largest, single physical asset that was assigned to the junior college. Part of the reason was that they were junior college texts, junior college library books. They fit. The Carnegie Grant that we had received earlier, had come directly to JJC, and that provided some of the funding for the library itself. So it just made logical sense to move that, in its entirety, to the temporary campus, when we moved there. That did happen, and that was fortunate from operations standpoint, too, because one of the first things we had going out there, was a library for the students to go to study in, to utilize,

to gather and so on. So, it was probably the most directly continuous shift to a new campus that we made.

Pogue: How did the college select its current site, and what challenges existed for its location no longer in downtown Joliet, and how did the roads present a problem?

Zaida: (chuckles) Well, I think they used some good sense in choosing. The method they used to choose the site, they had identified the geographic center of the district. The district stretched considerable distance, particularly from northeast to southwest, and the geographic center was somewhere near Channahon. The population center was near Six Corners, which was a part of the northwest section of the city of Joliet itself. So, when those two points were identified, they began to look for a site that would be somewhere between those centers, supposedly allowing for growth in some of the remote parts, so that we didn't put it entirely with concerns for current population, but we were concerned about where the population might grow as we spread the population in the district.

So a 368 acre site, midway between those two points, became the land that first they bought a portion of and took an option on the rest of it. So that was identified as where we wanted to build. They had some deliberations, when we reached the point of having an architect for the building. They looked at the site that was being proposed, that we hadn't finalized on yet.

I said, "Boy, there's an awful nice lake down there, on one end of the property. We could build quite a campus that would use that lake as its focal point." We even think the student center should be built across the lake or in a building that crosses the narrow part of the lake, what a delightful and attractive setting for the college. But, in order to do that, any possibility that these sixty acres over here could be included or could be added to the site, because that would make it ideal for us?

Negotiations took place. There was a sixty acre site, which would have been on the, let's see, on the southwest corner of the district, called the Dibble property. We put in a bid for it, came to an agreement on the price, and then went to the Community College Board to seek permission to purchase it, to add it to the... Well, the long and short of it was that it took some time for the board to make its decision, but they said, yes, but you should remove comparable acreage of the campus that we had approved earlier.

The site was purchased, and the architects were told to go ahead. The complications with the road... Actually, the site was rather ideal, in that we were probably a mile from an intersection of Interstate 80 and Interstate 55. These roads are just major arteries. That's why Joliet is sometimes referred to as the crossroads of mid-America. So we were within... Well, the crows didn't even have to fly too far to get to that intersection.

The problem was that there was a simple two lane, blacktop road that led from Jefferson Street, which was the main artery running East-West out of Joliet, which would have been the connection to Interstate 55. Then, to complicate matters, when we moved to the temporary buildings, which means we built and moved in two years ahead of what was in the original schedule, the amount of traffic that the roads had to cover, had to deal with. And the fact that we had to provide for sewer and water accommodations, provided a challenge for, not just the students, but the staff at the college.

The roads were pitted before long. The students remarked and put up signs, calling these the Ho Chi Minh Trail. The city was not prepared to expand their plans, including converting what was first called Bush Road, and then was later name Houbolt Road, converting it to a four-lane highway. It would cross Interstate 80, and it would be logical to put an interchange at Interstate 80, so that we would have direct contact.

Looking to the future, things were ideal. As it turned out, the future was quite a ways away. The four-lane highway, I think, was finished in about 1980, and the interchange at Interstate 80, in 1993. So the promises were met, but you had to be patient.

Pogue: Why is the ag program rated so highly in Joliet?

Zaida: Well, I would go back to an earlier quotation that I had given you, A.O. Marshall, saying, "Good teachers make good schools." I would think that, fundamentally, that's the principal reason that it's rated so highly. Let me expand on that just a little bit. I would also suggest that the fact that Elmer Rowley was an ag teacher; Elmer Rowley was also president of the college; that you had Cecil Ingmire, a veterinarian, as vice chairman of the board. I would suggest that those things probably did not hurt, in terms of developing an ag program.

But, once again, there were a whole...Philosophically, go back to Maslow's hierarchy of needs. What are the first needs on the list of Maslow? Nourishment, you have to have a source of food, and you need shelter, security. That's what agriculture is about. The whole business of providing for the food supply and the lumber for your houses and things of that sort, that's a part of agriculture and forestry.

To support that, the U.S. government established land grant colleges, land grant universities. These were extra lands, public lands, that were given to universities for their use, providing they would develop educational resources in the form of universities and colleges that dealt with agriculture and engineering. Maslow's needs, once again, being met through an educational route.

Smith-Hughes Vocational Agriculture, [a] federal program, designed to put in some extra money into the local district, providing the high school ag teachers would work year-around, instead of taking the summer off. Think of what that did to the relationship between the ag teacher and the agricultural community, the family, the students working there. How logical was it? Who would think of agriculture and not include the summer as a major part of the work you have to do in agriculture, the application of the science that was developed at the land grant universities, and the way the ag teachers had to convey, in practical terms?

So, all of those resulted in year-round contacts with students and families. We had a group of faculty members, led by Max Kuster, to begin with, because he was the one that was at the high school. He was an individual who went out to the various FFA [Future Farmers of America] chapters at high schools, in what became our district. He spoke to them for their FFA banquets; he helped them with their judging contests, things of that sort. He was Mr. Junior College to these ag departments, throughout what eventually became JJC's total district. He was probably the best known professor in Joliet Junior College, by no small margin.

Then, as we started adding other instructors in the department, then we, as a college, became the place where we hosted judging contests, FFA events, speaking contests and things of that sort. We became home to some of the activities that were there.

And then, finally, the participation of Max Kuster and his staff and the contacts that he made out there with citizens in the Class I expansion, Class I vote, was no small accomplishment. That too was a situation where, do you want to become part of a district that you know nothing about? Or, do you want to go to one where you already have a familiarity with some of our staff and, certainly, a track record of students here?

That established the feasibility that the ag department should be allowed to grow, and it was. It began to grow, with the addition of new programs. The ag supply business program was established. Actually, ag supply business was established before we became Class I. That was already there. But, in addition to that, there was production agriculture. Bill Johnson worked with that. The horticulture and floriculture departments grew by leaps and bounds. You have greenhouse technology, and then, finally, the most recent addition, the vet tech program, were all programs that came about, because you had staff members who were hired with specific program capabilities and times. That ran from the ones I've mentioned, all the way through, small engine technology and the like.

You had a group of professors who didn't just work in the classroom. Boy, they were out and about. They were recruiters, students to their programs; they were active in various community agencies.

There was one project that was taken on by Dave Catron, who was there—forgive me, if I am forgetting another name, too, but I remember Dave’s—and that was the Cronin schoolhouse, bringing the Cronin school house to campus here. Once again, reacting to community and tradition.

This was a one-room schoolhouse that had existed on Black Road, just outside of Joliet. Obviously, [it had] no longer been used for many years, had fallen in disrepair. [It] was lived in as a house for a while. But the long and short of it was that, here was an ag teacher who got involved in bringing a one-room school to the campus, where now visitors come and find it hard to believe. It’s been reconstituted. It’s hard to believe that one teacher would be standing in front of this group of eight grades, teaching them what they need to know to move on in life. That’s the sort of thing that occurred in the ag department that I think makes it stand out as an operation that is unusually successful.

But in talking about it, I feel a little guilty, because there are other dimensions of the college that stand out in my mind, as well, but are being left out, just by lack of time. They’re not the only ones, but the ag department was an outstanding portion of our development.

Pogue: Did you have any experiences with any strikes, during your time at Joliet?

Zaida: Not to any great extent. One of the strikes that, in the middle of winter, occurred, when I was at UCLA. Being a part of the student services side, I didn’t work that directly with faculty, in that sense. Although I do remember being—attacked is the wrong word—verbally attacked by a colleague of mine that I had a long association with, who was a member of the faculty, said, “When are you administrators going to get this thing straightened out?”

It was a situation in which strikes are...Let’s face it; we were a part of a community with unionized labor...We were a proud “laborized” union community, during those years, and it spread to the schools. It spread from the high school to the community college. And strikes are a part of union strategy, union techniques. In most cases, my feeling was that they may well be justified, but I wish we could have solved it some other way. It’s a situation in which, “You got to do what you got to do.”

With one exception, I found one strike that, in my terms, would be, at best, ill-advised. It wasn’t a strike, I’m sorry. It was not a strike. It was an informational picket that was conducted on campus. What else was going on, on campus on that day? We were having an open house. We were having an open house for the first time at our new campus, and we were inviting students, prospective students, their parents to come in and check us out. And what do they meet, but an informational picket, which I think was poorly timed and ill-advised. But it wasn’t my decision. (chuckles)

Pogue: How did the boundaries of the school district and the population of college change, during your time?

Zaida: Well, I should have researched a list of enrollments through the years, but I didn't do that. Let me just mention a couple of things. Let me pick a couple of figures that illustrate some of the changes that occurred. When we were still a part of the high school, and we were competing for space, and we reached a point in time where space was no longer—and let's say, competition became rather competitive—we were growing a little bit faster than the high school was, in the central campus, now.

In 1959, for instance, we occupied 20% of the building, or we enrolled 20% of the students who occupied the building, in 1959. By 1964, when it was really becoming crowded, we had grown to 27% of the buildings. So we were occupying a bigger share of the building, as time went along, which then made it more important for us to find new quarters.

This was a growth that was...I'm not sure we worked for growth during those years. We accepted students, and we developed programs. I don't know that we did a lot of recruiting, other than those ag teachers, who went out and brought in students or the athletic department. But it was a natural growth in population of our community and our district.

When we began to operate as a Class I community college and had a campus that was attractive, and we had a faculty that was growing in size and exciting and developing, we did have recruitment. We did go out. We sent counselors out, things of that sort. We met with high school districts and began to recruit. Then the rate of growth increased substantially.

Now, I have to confess that I'm going to quit in describing the rate of growth after 1986, because I was no longer on the staff, and my knowledge of the rate of growth at that time would be fallacious, to say the least. But I do know that we continued to grow. We saw buildings built on campus. My participation with the foundation, at that time, led me to the understanding that we needed more money for scholarships and things of that sort. That's obviously a part of growth. But I was amazed, about three days ago, four days ago, I received a document in the mail that told me that, in 2012 the number of students that were served here reached 32,089 students and that this had meant a 26% growth in the last four years.

Now, they count students a little differently than we did back when we were in the old days with the Community College Board and their designation of what they considered to be the capacity of the campus. We used to have to develop full-time equivalency statistics, which means, how many credit hours do you generate that would be the equivalent of a full-time student? So, if you're operating on FTE [full-time equivalents], I think the first campus was

supposed to be large enough to hold 3,500 FTE. I probably should have researched that too, because the memory will fail.

I don't know how to convert 32,000 students to the FTE, so I can't compare those two time periods. But the fact remains that, during the 2012 year, in credits, non-credits and other coursework that is done here, that's how many local citizens participated at Joliet Junior College. And that's a lot of students.

Pogue: What have been some of the biggest accomplishments at Joliet Junior College?

Zaida: Well, I'm going to beg off on that a little bit. I think, basically, the biggest accomplishment of Joliet Junior College is being the community college that we were. We provided to our community, I think, an opportunity to be all that they could be as citizens. At least we got them started on that route. We didn't provide it all, but we provided them an opportunity to get going.

If you go back to the early graduates, our accomplishment is in our graduates. And I go to the early graduates, because those are the ones that are cited in Susan's book and in Bob's book. As a for instance, in the health services arena of fifty-three JJC grads, who became physicians and responded to a survey in 1950 and '51, twenty-five of the fifty-three were practicing in Joliet. Similarly, of fourteen JJC grads, who became dentists, eight were practicing in Joliet.

In 1984, the [from the] Yellow Pages for this region, thirteen physicians and thirty dentists were JJC grads. This is what I mean when I say we provided an opportunity for our community citizens to become all they could be and come back to the community, in many cases, to make it better. And that goes on and on.

In education of the JJC grads in that '50-'51 study, more than 40% of those grads were involved in education in some way, some role. They weren't all teachers. Some were administrators; there were superintendents. The county superintendent of Will County was a JJC grad. Many of the noted faculty at JJC were JJC grads. In fact, it almost became a concern of mine, as I was reading it, that we were becoming too local in our hiring. Yet, when you look at the caliber of the individuals that were being cited, I didn't have to worry about it, Elizabeth Beth Barnes, Harry Atkinson, Phoebe Henderson Kirby; I mentioned her with regard to the WAAA. Catherine Adler was the chairman of the English department. Vera Stellwagon Smith was employed as an English teacher, came back to be director of admissions and records and, incidentally, she and her husband are major donors to the Joliet Junior College Foundation.

One of my latest committee assignments with the foundation was to try to establish the best usage of the last contribution that Vera made to the foundation in her will, which was in the amount of \$4.3 million. Elmer Rowley was an ag teacher at Joliet Township High School and became the president of the current college. Beulah Green Hoffer was a physical education [teacher], and on and on.

At one time—and I don't remember the date on this, but it was fairly recent, because I read it in a publication—the listing of the junior college employees, all the way across, including faculty, but including paraprofessionals and clericals and support staff and things of that sort, there were forty members who were graduates of JJC. Current employees can give you better figures on that.

Pogue: As we close with our interview, what are your feelings about being part of the Joliet Junior College faculty and administration?

Zaida: I have a variety of feelings. I feel humble. I was given an opportunity. I was proud to be given an opportunity to be with the campus that long. At one time. I was asked what my career goals were; did I want to be president? My response was essentially, no, I would prefer to work as a team member, somewhere else along the chain of command, within the college. I feel particularly satisfied with having worked as a team member. I think that [I], in all modesty, made my contributions as a team member in the various positions I had.

Even when I spoke in a kind of negative way about feeling that the unionization and the faculty strikes and things of that sort were not healthy, this was not a situation that I found myself feeling that I had to take a position, other than a team position. I think we need to all do the best we could to work together to achieve what we were hired to achieve.

So, I feel good about my career at Joliet Junior College. And I'm particularly proud of the people I worked with. I think I was gifted to be working with some excellent team members.

Pogue: Well, Walt, I want to thank you very much for sharing with us your experiences at Joliet and your involvement with the community college effort in Illinois and sharing that early time period, when there was a transition between the township high school and the community college. So thank you very much.

Zaida: It has been my pleasure. Thank you.