Bearcat Memory Project Transcription

Summer 2021

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Date: 05-27-2021

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Byline: This interview was recorded as part of The Covid 19 Oral History Project, a project of the IUPUI Arts and Humanities Institute associated with The Journal of a Plague Year: A Covid 19 Archive. This interview was conducted through the University of Cincinnati in partial fulfillment of credit for HIST3158 under the supervision of Dr. Rebecca S. Wingo.

00:00:00

Katelyn Parvesse: Hi, can you please tell us your name and your association with UC?

Walter Langsam: My name is Walter E. Langsam. I’m, uh, taught as an adjunct for about thirty years. Um, but my association with UC began much earlier when my father became president of UC in 1955 until 1971. And I actually attended it for two months, but it was a bit much to be, uh, the son of the president. Faculty were either anti-administration [chuckle] or sucked up frankly. And, uh, so I went to Miami and finally graduated there, uh from there, and was very happy, but sometimes it was a little awkward , but uh, but I very and uh since World War two, when I was ten, my father was president of a college or university, and so I grew up really understanding how academic and administrative affairs, uh, occurred and how they uh affected people, faculty, administration, and students. And uh, also I taught at OLLI (Osher Lifelong Learning Institute)—um, I, I retired, uh, maybe five years ago from OLLI, and I retired from teaching as an adjunct at UC about five years earlier. But I, when I uh left OLLI, uh, which was because of transportation problems [chuckle] to get to Victory Parkway, I, I don’t have a car, um, uh I had, I was the second oldest uh longest term teacher in OLLI, I was one of the pioneers actually. And I admire that very much. Before that I taught in evening college, um, beginning—um, what—um—well thirty years before ten years ago [chuckle] I guess, uh forty years ago. And—um, um, I started in evening college teaching art and architectural history, but I was fortunate enough to be given an opportunity to teach in DAAP (Design, Architecture, Art, and Planning), uh as uh and adjunct professor in art history and I taught usually architectural history, so I really was involved uh within UC proper you might say. And, uh I was very much involved in architectural historian with, um, uh, Eisenman’s, Peter Eisenman’s DAAP building, um, it was great fun, and it had a number of tours with him, for instance, before it actually opened. Um—it was both exciting to be in a new building but it was also maddening, it was frustrating. So many of the walls are perpendicular to each other, which [chuckle] is particularly a problem when you are using slides. I always use pairs of slides, it’s the old Yale system. And you some, in some rooms you couldn’t get them parallel because they were almost on uh, on a perpendicular plane [chuckle], but they weren’t quite. Uh, but still it was exciting to be in—involved with that building. And I taught in other buildings before that. In the library to begin with.

KP: So, you said it was frustrating, when it was—um—

WL: When it was first opened.

KP: Yeah, so what—

WL: Have you, have you been in the DAAP building?

KP: I have, so what—

WL: And, it’s, it’s like a labyrinth. You really don’t know where you’re going.

KP: Yes—

WL: And, uh, though there are long vistas on the staircase and the atrium, you still get lost, and you, you end up not knowing where you’re going. And, uh, things of that sort. Um, one of the principals, sort of philosophical principles behind Peter Eisenman’s—um—concept for the building, or at least the faculty’s, or administration’s concept was that departments would be split up so their offices would be in different wings. And that was absolutely maddening. Um, I don’t know whether they’ve gone back and sort of consolidated them or not, but in many visual ways its very exciting, particularly the atrium area. Um, and uh it was a privilege in a way to uh be there. It was one of the first uh really, fully computer designed buildings in the country. A, A group uh, um Peter Eisenman uh taught at Princeton he had a group of students who were um brilliant at con—at uh visual graphics, uh architectural graphics, and they got together and they really invented how to cr—render three dimensionally in two dimensions. And uh, but it also speeded things up and so on, but it also allowed kinds of angles, uh, and in relationships with parts and spaces that really it’d never been possible before, um, so Zaha Hadid, for instance, b—based her inspiration on uh, though she maybe already been doing some of it, but uh that ability to render—uh in, in two dimensions three dimensional reality, so that was an exciting part of it, and some of the faculty, uh, one of the leading project managers for DAAP, uh were, uh may still be teaching there for all I know. I know he has an office a block away from here. Michael McNulty, he’s a great brilliant guy.

KP: What other, um, things have you seen expand on campus through your time there?

WL: Um, well one thing I, wa—was not an expansion that I wasn’t at all happy about, uh my father was responsible for CCM’s being brought to campus, uh and uh, for the building really, and um—also W—TUC I may say. And um also, setting up evening college, setting up the junior colleges or the community colleges they’re called now, uh and also evening college. And unfortunately, uh while I was teaching there, the um, they—they knew administration, uh decided to limit, um what’s it called um—open access. They no longer wanted to just have to take everybody who completed high school. Uh, I think that is very democratic. I was maddening for me who’s oftly hyper how frankly to try to teach, uh open access students, but I admired them. They were trying, and many of them, some of them anyways succeeded, but to get rid of them, and also at the same time to be honest to bring back fraternities and sororities, uh suggested an anti-democratic, um process or attitude, uh I think I can say that safely [chuckle] to you. Uh, that’s really what seemed to be happening at that time—uh and that, uh, would’ve been, what’d I say forty years ago, in the early eighties. Yes, I began teaching in eighty-five.

KP: So other than, like, internal things that you’ve seen expand, what architectural things have you seen? What are your thoughts—on—the architecture that’s changes over the years?

00:08:11

WL: Uh, well, my father was responsible for all the worst architecture, uh—before him it was really quite high quality, colonial revival mostly or deco variance. And, um what I think maybe what I should say, what I think is very important, uh when we came here, in the fifties—um—the university was a minis—mimicable university. Have other people mentioned that? Yes, it belonged to the city, and the city was loyal to it and vise a versa, and if you said you went to UC it was a certain prestige. And many of the leading figures, uh in those—after World War two until it became state in what—uh seventy- five or so, um were UC from UC, there were great classes, uh particularly women becoming having new roles as doctors and so on in the, in the uh thirties. And uh, one was proud to be at UC. It was the major, certainly educational, institution in in the city, perhaps still is. But, once it became part of the state system, it really lost the sort of local luster, and the local loyalty, except perhaps in sports. But there was much more interaction between the academics uh departments and, and the city business wise, scientifically in terms of law and medicine, but um, socially too, um—and uh—it really was a very wonderful atmosphere. Th—the UC system had financial problems, but it turned out, uh when my father came, having had a totally academic background, that he was practically a genius in fundraising, particularly—oh what are they called the bond—bond campaigns. And I’ll tell you a little story about that. Shortly after he came, he got, um, oh, serious medical problems probably felt the stain strain of this much larger and more challenging job that he’d had in previous colleges. And at that time Holmes hospitals where faculty and administration tended to be taken, elitely I suppose you could say, and um he was there, he had a real medical challenge, but they needed to take an X ray. So wearing um one of those paper gowns, it's open in the back, literally open in the back. And he was the most physically modest person you could imagine. And he was rather aware of his dignity[laugh]. And uh he had to trump through the tunnels, which were cold and wet and dirty. I mean, they're absolutely damp. I'm told they still still are that nurses and so on, use them. Um and he was just totally mortified. He swore that if he survived this, he would build a new hospital. And he did. And this is where he discovered his his abilities to deal not just with individual fundraising, which had been much of the case before it, but uh with the government and other institutions. So he was responsible for the current current hospital for most embarrassing reasons [chuckle]. Um—I uh came with my family here in fifty-five—um—but—um I'm a prexies brat, uh which is a term that refers to the children of college presidents, who either do just perfectly brilliantly, and or like me have all kinds of psychological problems relating to it. Uh the way you can hurt your parents, if you want to, is by flunking and I was quite an expert at that, even though, uh in three or four other colleges, uh even though, you know, I had what it took, and uh, um always did very well, when, uh when I was doing well. And uh as I said, uh, I I moved to Cincinnati, about fifty-six, and um, I got my first non-academic job. And I'd never had a paying job, I'd worked in a library once where they call me Crown Prince [laugh] mortifying [laugh]. That was the creed for, at

the library. And, uh, I got a job at uh Dubois bookstore, it was my first real job. It was marvelous, actually. Uh, and I loved working with books we were we also sell records, and the first high class paperback books—uh--was really quite innovative while I was there for a short while. But then, uh I I wanted to go back to UC, and I did while also working, as I said that caused problems. But I had um, uh my boss, Howard Dubois, founder of Dubois bookstore had a store in at Miami University as well. Um, and four brothers, he and his siblings each had a store in a corner of the state. But the main core was at Miami, and his father from a—Athens had founded it and his father was killed, uh at the beginning of the school year, when you take in thousands of dollars when all the textbooks were sold. And somebody, uh, the store door was left open and somebody came in with a gun. And Mr. Dubois, who was a retired professor threw the cash register drawer at him. And I've always this is irrelevant, but I've always said someone throw it at me. You know, they have hard, sharp metal edges and they were filled quantities of bills and change, really would be terrifying. And the guy shot him and killed him. And so the brothers were recirculated, and I ended up being the manager of the muh—Oxford Ohio Miami University store, uh which was my first real job responsibility and, uh, I found uh that I just loved as other colleges, uh, living in a city on weekends, and particularly I I commuted, I had the only student who had a car because I had to commute. But then to live in little Oxford, which uh was such a charming small town to some extent it still is, but it was absolutely, so at that time, I think that's the ideal situation uh to be in uh when you're in uh college or university to be in a small town but have access to a city. Um, and uh it was great for me, I bet times the problem and it always is with me. Um, I uh anyway, so I was able to commute and I also was able to graduate. Um I've just discovered um visiting the archives of Miami University where they had a complete run of the yearbooks, and I looked at my yearbook. Well, I was graduated at the end of summer. And I've always thought I graduated 1960. But that's when I went to New York. I really was a graduate of summer 1959. And I couldn't find myself in any yearbook, because, um, uh, you know, the yearbook was in June, and I was graduated in the fall. It was very frustrating, actually. But um anyway, uh—I was then able to go to New York, which was uh rescued me, and uh I think everybody should A go to a different graduate school from your, from your undergraduate work, preferably not in the same town. I told all my good students to get away from Cincinnati for their graduate school if they could get in. Uh, but um, I think everyone should live in New York for a year or two, at least. And I was lucky to live there for five years, uh, on my own and publishing, I may say that I was born in Manhattan, in 1935. So I'm a real New Yorker. And, uh, in my early years, we are in upstate New York, and then, uh, on Staten Island's from forty-five to fifty-two. And, uh it was a marvelous experience to go to New York, I tried little evening college at NYU, but actually, there was so much else to learn in New York. My job was dull a—a—and then I got home at four thirty or four forty-five, uh so I could always get rested before I went out for the evening, and had just a marvelous cultural and social life in in New York. Uh I'm still sort of living on that in a way. Um, but um that was as valuable as any academic experience I had. Uh, I started at Haverford College, which is one of the best small Quaker schools in the country, um but it wasn't very congenial for those in the arts because they were Quaker, and they had humane goals primarily. And uh, after working for five years in publishing in New York, through a

faculty member who was a good friend at Yale, I got a job in the Yale University Press. Which I may say it was very different from Prentiss while Paul where I'd worked when I lived in New York. Um, and, uh I took the opportunity knowing the faculty in the arts which was [unknown]

to uh go back to school I just married with helped make it possible. And, um—I—um—I just it it's just almost the best thing that ever happened to me. Uh, it was to go back to graduate school. I was just too old to join the architecture program. But I don't think I was at all suited for the practice with engineering and math with I’m incapable of and um, uh, there are other other reasons that I didn't really try to become an architect but architectural history writing teaching about it later on leading into historic preservation in Kentucky uh, and and here and uh was uh just absolutely right uh for me. And, uh, you may not know I published a book called Great Houses of the Queen City. Have you seen that the white book—

KP: Yes I have—

00:17:23

WL: with photographs by Alice Weston who sponsored the book and then I wrote the text. And many people think of it as a coffee table book. But it was really my last major opportunity. I thought that from the beginning to uh say everything I had to say about Cincinnati. Id early er worked in Frankfort, Kentucky, in Louisville, Kentucky, um in Lexington, uh finally in Covington, historic preservation and taught in local architecture in all those universities. Um, I—I’m I'm someone who was frankly trained in my field as well as I could at Yale, with great teachers like Vincent Scully, who was the most popular teacher in America apparently, um and and other authorities in my field, which was really Victorian architecture. But many people from Yale and Ivy League schools and even state universities in architecture and so on, were great snobs about local architecture. And I've always enjoyed local architecture. And I think my teaching Cincinnati architecture was one of my most valuable contributions, along with lectures and tours and promotional activities for the book. Um, I even taught in in real estate firms, and I think I probably did more practical good uh with realtors than uh any any any other single activity um I ever did, um but uh through that whole period, I did teach Western architecture. That's all we taught at that time. Uh, though, I tried to go a little east and south and uh, um, American art and architecture and since in that architecture. In DAAP, I taught in art history, but I had many students who were from the architecture, interior design, um particularly emphasis on interior design. I have, uh long before I was directly involved with the university, at some of the other places I taught, I saw it and I certainly saw it at UC, I have worked for state and local government for large scale firms like Pettis hall for Dutton Hoffers and Debois bookstore here, large and small scale and no environment is less present unpleasant than universities. Have, your other professors said any of that? Well, the interior interior competitiveness and struggle and maliciousness and destructiveness um, inside faculty departments, is just devastating. It's they are so can be so petty, and it can go on for years, I only really had to go to one faculty meeting, uh when I started uh teaching not, I became an associate professor in DAAP for a few years, and uh, I only went to one meeting, and they were arguing the same points they've been arguing for thirty years and I came in full of enthusiasm and you know, some knowledge about how things work. And and it was perfectly obvious that these suggestions been made over and over again, but there were older members of the faculty who were simply not going to let any changes occur, even in the new DAAP building. And I have a number of friends who uh, some of the most brilliant and, and uh, teachers who are given most continued to do research and publication and encourage lectures and advise students and so on, uh who because uh, other faculty were jealous of them um, um had had terrible times getting tenure those, the very ones who deserved it most are you in DAAP?

KP: No

WL: No, so you don't know who I’m talking about, it was all ten years or more ago, but um, and the relationship between the dean and the school has which we have within the College of DAAP, uh, was often just devastating, not supportive, but destructive. And I suffered from some of it too, but I observed it in others. Um, and in fact, when we first came here,

my father and mother as a team came in fifty-five. And not an official team, but an actual one they've been hired. My mother was wonderful, wonderful person and

a great asset to the university along with my father, not just supporting him, but the university. And um, there was a dean, I mean, there was a professor, I guess I shouldn't say what department who was very brilliant as a teacher and adored by the students. But he was part of a sort of professional anti administration cabal. And it was hard to believe when I came here, really a year after my father was hired, there were groups of anti administration, particularly, anti presidential faculty members. And he hadn’t a chance to do anything yet, but uh he was different from the previous president, and that's always there's always tensions along there. And uh, I I came home one time, and my father was really, very upset about the attacks from this professor, particularly, and uh, and we knew and liked him. Uh, and I said, you know, why don't you make him a dean and let him see what it's like to be on the other side. And my father did, basically, he didn't do it on his own trustees were there, and so on. And he did, and he committed suicide a few years later, this pain of being in the administration was just too much for him and really wasn't what he was suited for. Um, buy, um, that's perhaps the most unfortunate incident, I've observed that sort of feel a little guilty um about it. But uh and changes of administration can be absolutely devastating. Um, um particularly well, in the case of my father, he'd been here sixteen years, it was a period of almost continual expansion. After the war five years, well ten years after World War Two, I call it the war [chuckle]. Still think of it that way. And, um, the university was ready for expansion, and there was support on the part of the, the, the city and the institutions and the trustees. Um, but, um—when my father retired, he was called an Empire Builder, by some because that was the phase, uh, was the country as well when they recovered from the war and then started expanding. And, uh, but the next president was almost deliberately hired to be as different from my father as possible, uh

which was a great blow to him, because he had accomplished an enormous amount. And of course, there's time for change, but it was really very abrupt and very negative, and sometimes, frankly, well just rude. Um, and, uh that does happen and has happened since then, actually,

uh at UC. And I've observed these phenomena, also at Miami, and even at Yale, well actually very much at Yale [laugh]. Uh, when I first went to the graduate department, um there had been a feud between the old and the young faculty members, and a a whole middle gen—generation left, squeezed between the two. And, uh, so we had some marvelous, old distinguished professors, but we also had some brilliant young ones. Well, we had very few who were in the middle of their careers, which could cause problems for, uh, graduate students. When I was at Yale, I I was married. And um after I stopped working for the Yale press, um it was in the late sixties, and I—um—I joined something called the graduate students senate. Um, I was the secretary of it. The university had created a great report about uh the state possible improvements of the graduate school , of course it’s one of the great graduate schools in the world. And, uh, but there were, there were frictions and tensions and real problems and this was sixty-seven sixty-eight and not just located at Yale. And uh the no, no graduate students had been consulted in this major report on the fate, condition and fate of the graduate school, literally none. And uh, they knew nothing of our living conditions, and uh which was a major factor that factor. And just what it was like to be a graduate student at that point, which is a challenging period. So we, a group of us graduate students got together. Many of them were writing their dissertation. So they had sort of freer schedules, and many of them were just fascinating, brilliant people, particularly the President of the Senate called Morgan Couser, um, who went on to quite a career in using modest documents to study slaves, lives and conditions. Um, he was one of the first to look at things like land and taxes and, you know, ordinary statistical materials, which was happening in history all over, all over the world at the time, but he studied, uh inside people. Um, and our meetings were held entirely by consensus. We never use a parliamentary procedure, which I loathe myself, it's causes all more problems [chuckle] in my experience anyway than it serves, and we often were there four or more hours. Uh, again, the freedom of being writing dissertations and [chuckle]. I mean, there were a lot of demands on our time, but but we could get together at at seven and go on to midnight or or later. But we always reach a result, through his brilliance, I think in conducting such meetings. And uh, I finally wrote the report. Um, I I left Yale soon after. So I didn't actually really wasn't there to observe the results of it. But the the original committee and the faculty obviously learned uh from that, and I believe there are many other uh faculty, graduate students had much increased roles in later decision making that was one of the most positive and interesting things uh I ever did. I was older than the other graduate students, most of them not necessarily in this group, but uh, and so I was a different generation, almost deepen was just less than ten years, and being married and so on, made a difference. I I want to tell you an anecdote from that phase uh at Yale is the Inglles hockey rink, which is by design by Eero Saarinen. And it's a great swooping whale like building inside it has all these ribs, it curves ther like this. And, um, uh there it was used for large scale meetings. And they had one two to decide whether to get ROT—throw ROTC off campus or not. And uh I was there for three votes. And in each case, it was 1328 to 1328. It happened three times. And I'm here to tell you, that's true. And so they just forgot about—it was the end of the school year uh, they did something about it in the fall. But uh, and that seems so likely—like part of the late sixties. Um, uh, As as this graduate student said it. And I just if I may just tell you one other anecdote the living theater, which was the one of the most avant garde and daring and politicized theater groups in the in the country, uh in the late sixties uh, played at Yale. Uh, I, my wife taught in a very unfortunate um headstart program. It was the first one of the first in the country, most deprived areas, and she'd had to get up at five uh and get ready and it was just devastating. She was an idealist and it was just maddening, and um, the children didn't know up from down and in front of behind. They'd spent most of their lives watching television with no contact with adults no compensation, uh except shouting it was a horrible circumstance, so she was very, very unhappy about her part of it. My having started at the press, very prestigiously. And, uh, where I would get home around noon, because my first seminar would be one or one thirty, and so our schedule were completely different. And I would stay on campus ostensibly to do research and study, which I mostly did. But when there were interesting events like the living theater, um that's not quite quite the name. But uh uh I would take advantage of it. But I fortunately decided just in time not to go to the living theater. They were famous nudists. Uh, hair was sort of part of that movement. And they took off all their clothes. And then they encouraged everyone in the audience. This is the late sixties to take their claws closed, and they all went out on the street. And I'm, I think I would have enjoyed it, actually from several perspectives. But I wouldn't have been happy if my wife had seen my picture in the paper [laugh]. Im sorry. Um other other questions that are more specific.

KP: So what was it like being an adjunct professor at UC?

00:31:18

WL: Oh, I almost wish you wouldn't get me on to that. But that's probably what you really should hear. Again. Uh, we were treated horribly, taken terrible advantages of, particularly financially. Um, when I started in eighty-six, I think something like $300 a course. And it went up to 800 in a few years. And I was fortunate that when I taught as Associate Professor, there was a low number and I went up to 3200. And then they couldn't lower it even when I wasn't teaching in DAAP, uh they tried. But that was just even then it was no money at all. Nobody could live on it. And I know that I taught more than any other faculty member I knew because I taught a couple of evening classes. I taught all summer long. Um, I didn't teach for a while in University College, that's what I regretted the loss of University College and evening college, which were gave opportunities to deserving people who didn't have means or much background. And um—we really had few resources, most of us had no offices, not to ourselves. And yet again, we often taught so many students, and we were often the very ones who had regular office hours, or uh if we taught in surveys, whether we were the lecture or not. Um, uh, we were the ones who had the students come in and talk to them um personally and in small groups and grades. Um, and we lacked all kinds of benefits uh. What is it? s? SCRS it's the faculty retirement program and benefits. And uh, it may have changed but to me it was an absolute scam. Uh, you couldn't as an adjunct, accumulate enough benefits to retire in less than as I did in thirty years. And I had almost no funds uh, which I had to use because I've been paid so little. I had other jobs with uh uh with Dutton Hoffers bookstore and I gave lectures and tours and, uh but uh, I'm here in public housing at eithty-five. Not just but essentially because I taught as an adjunct for thirty years. And uh, I had my followers students who obviously thought I was wonderful and followed me from class to class. Uh, though I wasn't an easy,

either greater or um, and I uh but um I also have I've had my detractors, but because as an adjunct, and they were elective courses, they didn't have to take my courses unless they wanted to sleep during class or, and and get a minimum grade and there were students like that. I I never really became confident. I'm not yet uh in the use of computers, and I never, by the time I retired partly because of that, uh I, I, I didn't have to do it, I used YouTube, teaching music classes in OLLI, I loved it. But um my very last class um wasn't in that, and um they didn't have the proper equipment, the two projectors and and so on. And so I started the class not realizing that, and uh a mature student went and got me the equipment, but I had to sort of sit there at a dark room um for twenty minutes or so, and finally he came and we set it up. And I well that's when I turned the lights off, and I uh looked at my watch, but it was too dark. And I said, what time is it, and over my head was a big red uh computer clock, what do you call it [laugh]? And I lost the students, I I simply lost them at that point. And they were all of course, looking at their computers all the time. And I was very suspicious, particularly when I was certain papers and grades and responses and so on. I only lectured that’s all I did. I tried to get people to talk but I never succeeded. I just lectured. It was old fashioned, but many people I think really enjoyed that and not having teeth pulled from them during verbally in class. Um, uh, uh but anyway, in my very last class at DAAP, I walked down the aisle and looked at looked at the computer screens and it was dark, and they were busy playing their games, they weren’t paying much attention to me, I felt, but the girl I stopped and looked at was looking up all the works of art and architecture I was talking about on her computer and making the most fabulous notes. You know, she copied everything somehow into the computer or made reference to it. And she was turned out to be the best student. For that reason. It didn't let off the others off the hook, but it embarrassed me. Um, I, I, I enjoyed many faculty members very much many of them were wonderful teachers and fascinating people and good friends in in art history and and DAAP they were not large departments. And although we knew people in other schools, um photography and urban planning and so on within DAAP I never had a tremendous contact with other faculty members, although um, I'm always my my partner and I always enjoyed entertaining faculty members and getting to know them, other than at the cafeteria. And uh we had a role for maybe twenty years, introducing faculty members to new people who came to town uh to work for preservation organizations for uh uh for the art museums, and galleries. Um, and um, I'm not saying enough, but historical groups and so on. And when they first came to town because I was on boards and so on, we would meet them and we'd invite them to dinner and they would be introduced to all these other people that helped them a tremendous amount. But I will when we entertained in an old fashioned way with a sit down dinner and glasses and silver and what have you and formal houses you can see the remnants of it now. Not one of them ever invited us back. But it didn't matter and we got to know them. We saw them at um art openings and other events and that was enough for us. But they got to know each other. It was a role that my parents had at UC. My mother was just marvelous and entertaining. Um they did. Um, she in a way probably started one of the best university activities I know of. Every they had a magnificent president's mansion on Clifton Avenue, the Clawson house, which was given to the university for that role when the family moved in Indian Hill very generously, and it was made for entertaining on a large scale wasn't much to live in,

bedrooms were too small. But there was a vast two story entrance hall and great stairs and huge living room and dining room. And it was perfect for large scale and enter—entertaining. And my mother had the advantage of having housekeeper cook, who were wonderful. Uh, and I may say was turned out after the riots of sixty-eight, to be a wonderful link to the African American community after the Avondale riots in 1968. She was a wonderful woman, but they had these advantages. So every two weeks, they would invite uh a couple of 100 uh students from different departments or schools, seniors, seniors, and faculty representing those schools, so they would know them. Everybody knew one of the faculty meeting, and uh and they would have a marvelous buffet meal, uh always different. My mother was very proud that in I don’t know what what was it sixteen years, they uh she never duplicated the menu, and I still have a little menu box with all her recipes. Um, but um when I came back here in eighty-two, what I heard most from UC alumni was how much how grateful they were and how much they valued those opportunities to meet the president and his wife and, and, and socialize with the faculty it ended their UC experience, direct experience in a in a wonderful way. Um and I, in my fifteen sixteen years teaching, I mean, thirty years teaching, I bear as as a faculty member, I barely met any of the presidents, although I knew one or two, anyway. And most of them didn't remember my name when they saw me on campus. Uh, and, you know, they all know who my father was, and they thought of him. And I think those connections were a great loss. My father had the advantage of being able to meet students that he was shy, but he could meet students one on one on campus, and ask them about their background and their interests and their name, where they came from, and remember it and until the end of his life, he could meet people, and remember all that whereas I can't remember your name. I mean, I can, but it doesn't last very long. So it was a great advantage. And whereas my mother was just wonderful, loving, person with with people. And some equivalent of that may still go on, but I never saw or heard of any of it while I was teaching all those years.

KP: What was it like to be the son of the president of UC at a time?

00:48:32

WL: Well, it was as I said, just impossible.

KP: Yeah

WL: when I tried going to UC, and I could tell you some most devastating and funny epi—episodes. Um but um it didn't last very long because I went to Miami with my own role as as the as the director of the bookstore and then as a student. Um but uh a have a few times people tried to take advantage of me and demanded someone who had the same name I did whom I happen to meet when I started teaching it UC again called me in the middle of the night, meaning like if shots are very much I suspect, but call me in the middle of night and demanded that I I get his his daughter didn't like having to go to meals with everybody else in in the dorms and demanded that I get her exempted from that. This demanded that that's the last I've ever talked to him. And I occasionally there were that but mostly, I've been fortunate that my parents reputation um, with almost everyone uh who’s talked to me, thought they were just marvelous. My father accomplished a great deal and my mother was just a a wonderful woman and and those who knew them, they weren't pretentious. They were, in some ways almost unassuming. Although socially they were involved with the trustees and necessarily and donors and people of that sort but I don't think it ever affected they’re dealing with people in general. And uh the president of the university, at least at that time, and it may be an equivalent now and probably in sports primarily, I'm not a sports person, so I may well be prejudiced. But it is true that many of the donors and and the trustees are as much involved with the athletic programs as anything else. My father just adored sports because he grew up not being able to have any. Um but um, and I think I have sort of lost track. But um he was allowed while it was a city institution, to walk first in any parade in Cincinnati, before the mayor and the council people, because UC extensively was founded in 1819. And uh his institution was older than the city. And he had a wonderful cap and gown [chuckle]. And he, he literally I saw him several times literally leading a parade [chuckle]. And the second most important person, at least on campus, was I guess, the major dean went came from the University of Mexico or something which was dated from 1530 or something, so he could go in front of everybody.

And that's a sense of the prestige of of of the college, my father, and mother between them joined every kind of organization. Um, and sometimes my mother was free to being president of them, some were conservative, like the DAR and garden clubs, but she was also very concerned and active in some social issues. And my father went, you know, practically every day when to lunch and meeting with some organization. Um, from very well, what can I say ordinary groups to the well, the elitist, most elite, I suppose that you can't say most for elite is elite. I I I, somebody asked me, somebody, she started working at the Queen City club, you know, downtown, the the city main city Club, which we were members of as part of being president of the University, that and the country club, and the university Club, which were at that time, again, the elite groups and marvelous places to meet and get to know the people who ran the city. Well, inside the Queen City club was a group of maybe a dozen if that many

distinguished leaders of the city the presidents of the college, the Archbishop, the head of the leading law firms P&G, I don’t know about Kroger back then. Um, but they were all very distinguished men naturally. And one time, I very rarely was allowed to join the meeting, because I lived out of town and it was safe. And my opinion was my observation was they sat at a table in a special room with a special Rookwood Punchbowl, the middle of it, and one of the group would raise a topic that was a civic topic that was a great important some of them very important, some of them seem trivial to me. And then they would go around the table. And these representatives of all these important influential institutions would say what their attitude was towards, so they worked out potential conflicts in private and confidentially.

In a way that apparently allowed them to run the city said like 3C DC now, and I just learned the other day, the group still still wh—functions and maybe it has that influence, but it was absolutely fascinating to observe. And I'll go ahead and tell you something else. Though this you really shouldn't spread. Do you know who Carl Lindner was? Uh sorta the richest and in his own world, most powerful man in town but also uh born again Christian and bigoted and power

had to be in his own hands. But I guess when my father retired, I said why don't you ask Carl Lindner. And they did, I'm told and he didn't respond, except through a secretary has something to say that he wouldn't consider joining any group where liquor was drunk. And he missed an extraordinary opportunity to join the the establishment, which at that time was very unlikely.

But I hope by now that the, the organization is much more inclusive than it was at that time.

KP: You spoke about riots a little bit ago, like student riots. Can you talk more—

00:56:05

WL: Uh excuse me. Yes. I wasn't here I was at Yale.

KP: Oh okay.

WL: And I believe it was in sixty-eight. There was a combination of student riots. And we saw that at Yale, you know, one of the early ones, and, and in a way, my being in the Graduate Student Senate was part of that. And the living theater added to the sixties. But it was also here race riot. And took place mostly in, in Avondale. And maybe that was more concentrated African American population. And my parents had a young couple who were very good friends, my brother and I didn't live at home, and I often thought these were sort of proxies for us. But it was a wonderful young couple. Husband and wife. And they were killed when they stopped by the Sears building in the center of Avondale, which is Reading road and University Avenue.

Their car broke down. And they were killed. And my parents never recovered. It completely soured their last few years. Um. And there were, you know, plenty of I won't say good causes, but there were certainly pleasant, plenty of causes for both both riots. But they have generally been forgotten. Did you know about them on campus. They closed the campus down for a while. And maybe for quite a while, as I say, I wasn't here. Unfortunately, my parents were in Madagascar uh dealing with a Madagascar alumni organization. And it took them practically a week to get back when this started because they had to fly to Africa, there was sort of one two week flights and then go to Europe, and they had come to America and then to Cincinnati. And so my father wasn't there. And this is an interesting phenomenon. And I won't name names, but because my father was a very strong administrator. Uh, and he was wonderful at hiring people to work with them. But it turned out on this occasion, that they tended to be weak, because they were so dependent on him. That may not be very good, administrate, but it worked until this point. And so there was really no one on campus with the authority to deal with a student riot. And um—um as I said, when he when he came back, it was too late. I've met some of the students who sort of closed down the campus and invaded the administration building, including my father's office, and I've talked to them about meetings they had with him, and also young faculty. And some of them still didn't forgive him. I've been surprised and a few cases where who are rather hypocritical. There was one mayoral candidate some time ago, whom I met at a—a the head table of a meeting, and he made went out of his way to tell me how far wonderful my father was how fair and how he welcomed them and had all the answers of the meeting. And week later, in his campaign, he announced that he led this assault on the president in his office and he told Dr. Langsam what was what [chuckle]. And this was in a week. These contradictory attitudes. That was tough to deal with uh whether in the long run uh

something like that, in both cases, was necessary. Uh but uh, they're not well known. I have friends, you know, my own age, who were here and were on campus. And uh, it was a terrible time for them. Those students were trying to get degrees and so on. And those who were sympathetic with with the problems. Um—As far as I'm concerned, I was in graduate student in Yale, and aside from that committee I wasn't very directly involved with with the protests. But uh it changed the whole character of the campus and to some extent afterward. And I'm sure that was true here. It would be interesting to hear what uh, other older faculty people um um how they recall that it might be a question worth asking if they've been here since the sixties. Of course, not many are still living, but um, uh, it was a crucial point. And since it was at the end of my father's tenure, it was a real problem, because he'd been an empire building, but at the end, uh he and university didn't really co in the city for that matter.

KP: Just out of curiosity, what was the conditions like it you see for LGBTQ members? Are you familiar with LGBTQ?

01:01:54

WL: Yeah, I may say I'm gay. And those thirty years I taught at UC, I was living with a wonderful man who own Dutton Hoffers bookstore. And we were married last two years before he died. And that was really quite wonderful. And while I'm at it I'm what, I was the first person listed in this area, on a death certificate as spouse. I came before that famous court case, uh using the same lawyer in the same Undertaker, but I was first he asked me what was my relationship, I said, spouse, and he put it down. He's a good friend now turns out. I was in an awkward position as the president son, people were afraid of me. And I was also a rather emotional demonstrative person, I wasn't exactly safely in the closet, I was very naive. And although I knew gay people and had some close friendships with him when I was at UC, and at at Miami,

everything, nothing ever resulted from it. We were closeted. And I haven't been closeted since even the ten years I've been married to some extent. But aside from that, uh, married woman, I've been openly gay, in almost all contexts since 1960, when I went to New York. Um. And I think it's just fabulous the improvements that have been made in opening life to gay people, and gay relationships, being able to take advantage of their outlook. Um, I believe very strongly, and my good friends in New York particularly, always felt that if you were uh interested in civil rights for gay people, you were for everybody else. And many of the best gay people I know have been really taken that very seriously. I may say, I've lived in a white world almost my whole life. It was what it was known through Melody Sawyer Richardson, all the black leaders in town because she was a marvelous hostess integrate people. But I was able to move from Clifton—uh—to here where the residents are eighty percent African American, and I've felt completely comfortable. I am not sure about they with me, but certainly I with them. The only real problem was first the masks and then I think even more so the vaccinations and it's been improving but I was, I’m the oldest person here so they started with both the masks and so on. But it was very uncomfortable for quite a while because I I felt I had to say, where's your mask? And have you been vaccinated? And that caused a lot of resent but but gradually people have shared understanding? I'm embarrassed, I didn't wear my mask downstairs. I do indoors everywhere like that.

KP: Speaking of black citizens, how were—How did you notice a difference between UC treating white students and black students? Or did you see a difference in the way that—

WL: When I taught there were still? You know, I said up to ten years ago. I guess it was fifteen for teaching on campus. I wasn't aware of it. Uh differences. But I think I had almost no black students at all. And almost no Asian students. My colleagues who stayed on teaching, uh, had both fellow faculty members and students who were black, but particularly Asian, in DAAP I think um, so I never dealt with that issue. I never had to. And I never had any problems with individuals, fortunately. And I wasn't aware of anyone else who did that. I don't remember hearing of any incidence. And I don't know how it is, UC. It's infinitely more diverse than it was, isn't it?

KP: Yeah

01:07:07

WL: And supportive? Yeah.—This isn't really relevant. But here I am on the seventh floor of Elm and Central Parkway. I'm looking south to downtown and East over the Rhine. And our riots last year, were all around here, we would just see the and hear, these hundreds of people and go this way and that way. You know, City Hall is one way the courthouses the other Vine Street, the police station, Washington Park. And it was absolutely fascinating. I don't watch television, but I brought a little television set out and I sat here turned around, looking at all these goings on at one point. They were they were in Vine Street and Central Parkway. And I could see and hear it happening and watching it on the television set. It was thrilling in a way I really was thrilling and to see so many young people in so seriously involved. There were certainly very distressing aspects. But I don't attribute that to most of the idealistic young people who were interested in the cause. And on the other hand, I do believe that since the riots in 2010, or 2001, uh, that the police have taken notice. And I think this is a model police program here.

They may have made some mistakes last year, but uh, uh they could have been much worse and and I think the heads of the police department and and others fire departments and so on and the city um, from my standpoint, with some perspective, um, handled it extremely well. But so did most of the people who were not rioting but protesting and I didn't mean to use the word inappropriately, because they certainly what I saw and heard from here were certainly protests. But I could also look out that way. And there were half a dozen star friends smashed.

KP: So I want to be mindful of your time. Is there anything that I haven't asked you that you would like to talk about?

WL: Well, you asked me about the architecture of the campus. As as as I say most of the older campus and the surroundings were traditional, rather good colonial architecture. I can tell you an anecdote though, my father, particularly because I was in architectural history and so on, was interested became interested in the building and he was the ultimate authority on which architects were chosen. And this again, is under the city rather than the state. And I remember him, I over heard him so saying to himself now look we've had a Catholic architect a Jewish architect, it's time for a Protestant and that is how so crass decisions were made and they had to be because architects and builders and insurers and realtors are extraordinarily important supporters of the university I don't think people realize how incredibly important construction is financially in the university. Um, but uh, but the buildings nevertheless, were no great stakes. Crosley, interesting, you know, it was the most innovative. And I remember coming home and passing it at night when there were cranes and lights, and they, it's the first continuously poured high rise building and the world su—supposedly. So they had to work all night long. That should be remembered when they try to tear it down. It's why it's so hard to expensive to tear it down. But uh I do think the what what the architect program, that's not what it was called here um, under President Stegger, um, when they hired all the greatest contemporary architects, um, Zaha Hadid being downtown, but Eisenman and Graves and many others on campus, that was a conscious program to uh improve the quality of the architecture. They had to go through the state. And that was a real challenge. But uh actually, the person who ran the program was not the President to who who was very intellectual, culturally limited, I saw I will say, the least I can say, but he lasted as long as anybody else. But still, it was the finance director, Dale and I forgotten his last name was an absolute fan of architecture and very knowledgeable. And he made it possible he dealt with he and some development, people on campus dealt with the state, which was a real real challenge. I mean, Ohio State had its own equivalent program with the Wexner Center. But um, and other projects, but um it was thrilling to be around to work in the buildings and the walk through them, and things of that sort. They're of uneven quality. And we all have our favorites. I have the delight, Michael Graves, and most of the modernist teachers and students just hate Michael Graves as a post modernist for being sentimental. And, frankly, I think it was time to be sentimental and be humorous and eclectic. So it was very refreshing. But to have examples of all these major architectural firms, and to live and work in them was terribly important. And it had a great impact, at least for a short while on the caliber of students in DAAP particularly in architecture, and to some extent, I think in engineering um, uh to bring people here, it really had a major impact, as I say, not very long, because those are all fads and tastes change. Um, but um it certainly was positive. And again, being right in the middle of DAAP was very exciting from its impact on DAAP particularly. Does that answer your question? [chuckle]

KP: Yes it does. Well, thank you so much for your time, Professor Langsam. Um, is there anything else you would like to say?

WL: Well, it's a great pleasure to do this.

KP: It was a great pleasure having you.

WL: Yeah. How do you like my apartment?

KP: I love it.

WL: [laugh] As I say, everything was in storage and it's still coming back. But I I I kept heirlooms which almost nobody did. Uh, I had family paintings and portraits from Vienna, the turn of the century Vienna, Austria, my father was Austrian. And uh I gave them to my daughter and her family when we when I moved back. Uh, but uh otherwise almost everything is either something I inherited or bought with a spouse or, or had always collected knowing that eventually I would have family things and so that they they would mesh with each other. So

KP: Well that’s amazing

WL: I hope other people will learn that lesson. My kids and grandkids belatedly have welcomed everything I have to give an offer and tell them about that thrilling. One of the best things in my current life.

KP: That's amazing. Well, thank you so much.

WL: My pleasure.

01:15:30