John Shaw

Interviewed by Marie McCabe on January 17, 1985 and February 20, 1985, at an unknown location.

Oral history tape number: 55

John, will you give me your full name, where you were born, and when you came to Madison?

My name is John R. Shaw. I was born in February 1916. My family moved to Madison in late 1917 or 1918. My sisters were about ready to enter the university and it seemed better for the family to live in Madison. It was a matter of economics.

What did your father do?

My father was a newspaper man. He was a politician, is about the right word for Pa. He was a postmaster in Ellsworth. He started out as county superintendent of Pierce County schools, then he became postmaster. While he was postmaster he bought the *Ellsworth Record*, which was the country newspaper in Ellsworth, and he ran it for several years. Then he bought another newspaper in Hudson. It was at this time, about, when the family concluded that they wanted to come to Madison.

What was his full name?

John Shaw. I am the seventh consecutive John Shaw.

So he came here as a newspaper man?

John Callahan was the superintendent of the Department of Public Instruction and he was a close friend. He was born and raised in Pierce County, as was my father. My father and mother were both born and raised in Pierce County. When John Callahan became superintendent of schools he wanted my Dad to come in to the department. He appointed him to some job.

When he first came to Madison he was editor of the *Equity*, which was a newspaper for farm cooperatives and was published in Delavan. Dad commuted back and forth and we lived here. Then he was appointed to the Department of Public Instruction in probably 1921 – I don't know the exact date – as superintendent of state-aided schools. He remained there for his remaining life, in the Department of Public Instruction.

What was your mother's maiden name?

My mother's maiden name was Lorena Caroline Rosehill. She was also born in Diamond Bluff, in Pierce County. Her father was the Pierce County sheriff for many, many years. I've told the story many times that my mother was born in the Pierce County jail which, indeed, she was. They had the jail and the home for the sheriff in the same building. Her father was a farmer, as was my other grandfather. Grandfather Shaw was also a farmer. Interestingly enough, they both raised horses as sort of a hobby. My Grandfather Shaw raised Morgan horses, riding horses, and my other grandfather raised draft horses. They were friends. That's how my father and mother met, was through the relationship of my two grandfathers.

And you had sisters, you said?

Two sisters. Evelyn was born in 1898 and Merle in 1900. If you look at my birth date you will see I'm kind of a trailer. That's why we came to Madison early on.

And where was your home?

When we first came to Madison we lived on the east side, right across the street from Orton Park. I can't remember the name of the street. I don't really remember that. Then we lived in Nakoma, what is now Odana Road, in a little rented house. My parents apparently couldn't find the kind of a house they wanted. They needed a big house because it was anticipated that my grandmother,

my mother's mother, Grandmother Rosehill would come and live with us. With a family of five and Grandma, we needed a big house.

Your sisters stayed at home while they went to the university?

In the 1920s everybody stayed at home. They were both members of a sorority; they were both Alpha Chis and both active. But everybody lived at home!

If you lived in Madison you stayed at home.

That's why, again, I think that my parents felt that was the only way they could afford to send three children through the university was to live in Madison. I don't think my Dad was particularly... I think he would have rather stayed in Ellsworth. He was very happy there and it was a good newspaper. The house I was born in was a beautiful old house, with a great big yard. Very pleasant. My grandmother lived right across the street.

I had a wonderful time in Ellsworth. I liked it only as we went back to visit it. I don't remember it as a child, as a baby. Every summer we went back to Ellsworth.. My grandmother stayed in her own house in the summertime and then she came and lived with us in the wintertime in Madison. They rented their house, usually to teachers, in Ellsworth.

You lived in Nakoma?

On Odana Road. It's a little house that's still there. I remember it vaguely. Then finally they found a house in Wingra Park on Adams Street, the 1900 block of Adams Street, one that was large enough. It had five bedrooms and a great big attic. At one time they anticipated putting more bedrooms in but they never did. It was a big, old, nice square-eye house in Wingra Park.

Is it still there?

Sure.

What number?

1910. Been there for many years.

That's a nice neighborhood to grow up in.

It was a wonderful place to grow up in. We had Vilas Park just a block away. As a kid, it's interesting that my life and my interests were in nature conservancy, and the Arboretum, for example, is now almost in that location. As a little boy, as a young boy, we used to camp in what is now the Arboretum. We built roads, we had bicycle trails, we being the neighborhood kids, Joe Jackson and Red Kelly and Bill Harley, whom some of you would know, I'm sure, from WHA days, and Bob Hummel and Bud Cantwell and Bill Riley and all the neighborhood kids. The Arboretum was our playground. We literally went over there.

What was there then?

Nothing. It was an old farm. It was an abandoned farm, as I recall, as a child. I'm talking now when I was around ten. We were old enough to build rafts and go across Lake Wingra, which was, of course, there.

Oh! I assumed you rode bikes around it.

No, no. We had rafts and boats. Our parents apparently were sort of agreeable to this. I remember I fell in once on a Sunday. My mother was pretty upset because I had my Sunday-school clothes on. That didn't go over so well.

I don't suppose you had life jackets and cushions then?

We had life preservers, I think you would call it. Yes, we all knew the lake, we lived on the lake, we loved the lake, we swam there, and we were careful.

And it's not an unusually rough lake.

No. We never had... parenthetically here, Bill Riley, who was a wonderful, successful attorney here in Madison, of Riley, Riley, & Riley, he was drowned in the lake when, as a young man, he was skating with his children. To this day I find this hard to believe. He was drowned about twenty years ago. Where he was skating, we knew as children it was dangerous. We never went over there because that's where the springs are, over near the Wingra spring there. Right up from there he was skating there. He had a son who was old enough to skate by himself, and he had his little girl and he was carrying her on his shoulders. When he realized he was going through he obviously decided to take the little girl and pitch her. When he came down he hit his head on the forehead and it knocked him out.

Was the water deep there?

Wasn't particularly deep, but it was cold. I think he was knocked unconscious. He never should have been there. I'll never forget this day. And I'll never forget his brothers, John and Miles. We don't know why he was there. It was just unbelievable. But it was a wonderful neighborhood for kids.

You were essentially across the lake and you would be out in the country.

Sure, sure. We could go from our house just up Edgewood Avenue, which wasn't a street when I was a little fellow, a kid. We'd go down in the swamp behind Edgewood College, along that drive that goes around, and we could be forty miles out in the woods as far as that's concerned.

Was Edgewood there then?

Edgewood was always there, yes.

But one building, I suppose, at that time.

Edgewood was then a boarding school for little ones. Children were sent by their families to board there and they went to school there. It was well known to us. Our neighborhood was primarily a Catholic neighborhood, lots of Catholics in our area, because of the proximity.

Sure, just like we are at Queen of Peace.

Exactly. I shouldn't tell this; my mother would turn in her grave. When I was a little fellow and was very naughty I was afraid of the nuns for a very simple reason. When the little kids from Edgewood went for a walk there were two nuns in front, a string of kids, two nuns in the rear, another string of kids, and two nuns bringing up the rear. They marched! They didn't walk, they didn't shout. They just walked, looking straight ahead. I didn't know. I'd see them coming and I'd go across the street because I didn't want to get in. My mother, if I was really naughty, I remember she would say to me, "If you ever do that again I'm going to give you to the nuns."

I think they're very foreboding anyway, the black habits, and it's something very mysterious to children. It was to me too, I know. You can't figure it out.

I told that to Sister Marie Reges, Marie Stephens, a few years ago and she just thought that was one of the funniest thing she ever heard. That's true: my mother said "If you're not good I'll give

you to the nuns."

I suppose you went to school in between all this fooling around.

Oh, sure. Wingra School. And to Madison West [High School]. Marvin Lee and I were in the same class. We were the last class in Madison to start school in February because of the age situation. We were in the last high school class to graduate in February in the city of Madison. That was fifty years ago. We were a very close-knit group. What is interesting to me today is that among our close personal friends, of whom you know most of them, we all went to school together, grammar school and high school, and we're still here.

That's a wonderful part. It doesn't happen too often with childhood friends.

We've been together all these years.

Now, those boys were all neighbors.

In the neighborhood. The Wilkies lived on Keyes Avenue. They were part of this group. We had gangs in those days, and we played soldier and had communication systems. Joe Jackson and I – that's Colonel Joseph, William Jackson's son Joe, who still lives in Wingra Park – we had wires strung over telephone linens and we could talk to each other. We were all interested in amateur radio. We all had, first, crystal sets and then we had what were called vacuum sets, when one tube sits there. Some of the kids, Vic Nelson and I, became amateur ham radio operators. Russell Morris was the conservative guy. He was Joe's brother-in-law. He's now a very distinguished ham operator. He started in the old days in Wingra.

Did all of these fellows, your companions, go on to school eventually?

A few left Madison, but nearly everybody ended up through high school and went in to the university here. Very few of us went away to school. We were Depression children. This was a middle-income neighborhood.

But they all had assumed they would go on to school? It was not a working-class neighborhood.

There were some. Next door to us, our closest and best friend neighbors were the McCoys. Andrew McCoy worked for the Northwestern Railroad. There was some time it was thought that his son Jim would go to work for the railroad. Well, Jim ended up working for me at the Co-Op and is still there. All these wonderful connections, neighborhood and family connections.

Everybody was fairly comfortable in spite of the Depression coming later, I guess.

We were all hurting during the Depression and yet nobody was hungry. Nobody was hurting terribly, but we didn't have any extra, any of us. That went through the whole neighborhood.

They all continued to have jobs of some kind.

I know I can't remember of anybody who was unemployed, who had to go on relief.

That was some of the advantage of Madison, in that it didn't hurt us as much as some places.

My Dad became very ill in 1931. The same thing that I just got out of the hospital for. He was terribly ill. He was off for two years and that really hurt. But the girls were out of school.

Did they have jobs?

Oh, sure, sure. Evelyn got a job immediately after school. She went to [unclear] and started teaching. Merle got married. She married Ray McGowan. He, at that time, was tremendously

successful. He had an automotive supply business, McGowan & Lee Company in Madison, but he went bankrupt in the Depression. He was the only one in the family that really had a small disaster. They moved into his mother's house on Madison Street. Ray and I and Cliff Connery and other friends had to remodel the upstairs into an apartment, and that's where they lived while he got on his feet.

He grew up with Tom Coleman. He's a Madison native. He was born in Madison. Tom Coleman was a close boyhood friend of his. This is in the pit of the Depression. Ray tried several things, unhappily and unsuccessfully. He sold for an oil company, I remember, because that was related to his business. Ray was a graduate of the University of Wisconsin in 1917 and had planned to go to law school, but he got drafted and went into the service and never went back. He got into this automotive thing. Tom said "If you will go to school and take accounting I will get you a job as a cost accountant at the Madison Kipp," which is what he eventually did and Ray worked there for the rest of his life.

Well, it sounds like you remember having very happy times.

I had a wonderful childhood. Now, being a parent and a grandparent, I look back with great sympathy to my mother. Well, my mother was forty-five when I was born and she had a terrible time coping with us kids.

I suppose you spent a lot of time with the neighbor kids and they were at your house.

Yes. But this was hard on my mother. Her sister Maude, my aunt Maude, a wonderful woman, had a lot to do with the bringing up of my sisters. And my grandmother, of course, lived there. The interesting thing is that probably in the mid 1920s – we were well established on Adams Street – my grandfather, my father's father, came to live with us, too. So it was John Franklin, John George, and John [unclear], we were all there. I was, of course, always Little John. Anyway, my paternal grandfather and my maternal grandmother and my sisters. Evelyn was gone, Merle was probably still home.

How did your two grandparents get along together?

Fine, but my Dad used to say, chewing on his cigar, "You'd better get married so we get a bedroom back."

They didn't get along quite that well.

There was never any... they liked each other and they respected each other. They had known each other all their lives. My Grandfather Rosehill and my Grandfather Shaw were close friends, as I said. They had known each other for many, many years. Those things were done in those days. My grandfather and grandmother both died there.

Did your grandmother help around the house?

She was marvelous. My grandmother kind of made a home for us. She was the principal cook, she was a wonderful seamstress. There were a lot of things. She made hook rugs. That rug right there was made by my grandmother and she's been dead for thirty years or more, forty years.

Was your mother active in the community at all? What did she do?

Essentially no, she was not active in the community. She was a very active participant in the Christ Church, Christ Presbyterian Church, downtown. She was an excellent bridge player. She loved bridge. She played in two groups of bridge players. Even played a little duplicate.

And this was contract bridge in those days?

Yes, yes. Well, later on. The only thing that I ever remember her being involved in particularly was the YW, a little bit. My sister Merle was very active in the Madison YWCA. But Mother was strictly a homemaker.

And she got along well with her mother?

Fine. They were very close. Very fond of each other.

And, of course, housework was a little more demanding in those days.

Very different than it is now. I can still remember my father grumbling when he had to take the damn carpets out. We had a big yard, a beautiful yard. They would take the carpets out and hand beat them. I remember him hating that job.

Did you help at all around the house?

I had chores that were not really household chores. My father had a thing about shining shoes. I shined his shoes and I washed the car every Saturday if the weather was anywhere near okay.

Mowed the lawn?

Yes, I mowed the lawn. And snow shoveling. In those days they had a horse and big plow that came by and plowed the sidewalks.

Really! You didn't have to do it.

Well, we had to help because they didn't come right up to the house, and we had to do the porch and so forth. We had a great big front porch and a great big back porch. And, oh, my room had to be in sort of orderly fashion. That was a house rule.

Did you have a coal furnace?

Of course.

Did you shuttle coal?

In the winter. My Dad took care of that. He traveled a lot. I helped, but my mother usually fired the furnace. I hauled the ashes out.

Did you have a garden? Did your parents have a garden?

I'll never forget the guy, can't remember his name, but I can see him to this day. He came out every spring and spaded the garden. Then my grandmother ran the garden. My grandmother was a marvelous gardener.

And did a lot of canning, I suppose.

All kinds. Our house was built in 1910 by Fuller, a man who later became the director or assistant director of the Milwaukee Historical Museum. One of his objectives was to try to plant every kind of a plant that was native to this part of the country, which was insane, because...

Tried to be the Arboretum, but you didn't have that many acres.

We had plum trees, apple trees, gooseberry plants, currants, raspberries. A big garden.

So you had a big lot then?

Yes, it was a big lot.

Did you have a garage?

No, we didn't have a garage of our own. We had a garage a block away. The reason my father never built a garage was because we had a heated garage. It was just marvelous. See, in those days, in the 1920s, you put your car away in the wintertime, or at least our friends all did. You didn't drive a car in the wintertime. You took the bus, or the streetcar then.

You couldn't count on the car getting started, I presume.

Getting it started, yes. And the streets weren't plowed. It was terrible driving.

Do you remember the first car that your family had?

Oh, sure. The first car, I remember the 1916 [unclear]. I've got a picture of it sitting right here. I'll show you. He had a Ford before that. We had Fords until this one, which was his first big car.

Is that you sitting there?

My two sisters and me.

You're about two years old there?

I was about six months old there. That was taken in 1916. I was born in February, so it was probably taken in the spring.

You're probably still in dresses there. That's cute.

Here's another little one.

This is a picture of an open sedan with four people sitting in it, and John Shaw, baby. Is that on your father's lap?

Yes.

And that's your sister in the back, I take it.

She returned to the family later on. You can see how much older my sister is. They took care of me, not my mother. My mother was... I think we would call her today a woman, and I say this with a deep respect and all the kindness I can muster, I think Mother suffered from depression. We didn't call it that, but she was very... she cried a lot.

She did? Well, your sisters look charming and look like they're delighted with you.

They're wonderful girls, both of them. I'm very fond of both of them. Evelyn, of course, just died.

That is a sweet picture of you. I can see why you grew up to be so handsome.

Why I grew up to be so spoiled is what you mean. We had a pleasant, happy boyhood, and Wingra Park was a wonderful place for kids.

I wanted to ask you about that. What was at Wingra Park in those days, in the 1920s?

The one block on Monroe Street, the 1800 block, the drugstore. They're still there. There were two grocery stores, the Hirsch Grocery and G. F. Emery's grocery store, and Menges drug store, Furgin's bakery, and Wilhelm and Gilles hardware store. All on the 1800 block of Monroe. And a couple of smaller shops.

There was a meat market there.

Sure. And then Tony Mack had the one up in the next block, and Cain-Ashcroft. That was the business district. Then there was Van Helson Hoff shoe store. It was a very nice neighborhood and a friendly neighborhood.

In the park itself, Vilas Park, was the zoo there?

Sure.

Pretty sizeable little zoo at that time?

Very much like it is today. The lion house was there, the monkey house was there. They were there when I was little, when I was a child. I remember them building the monkey island, for example, which is still there. Just built a modernized one there. It was a zoo very much like it is now.

And as popular?

I think so. I think probably more so. On Sunday you go down there and there would be hundreds of people having picnics. It was the place to go.

You could get there by the streetcar, I presume?

We just walked, of course.

You could, but other people?

There was a streetcar on Mills Street and on Monroe Street, so it would be a long walk. You'd get off at Grant Street and walk to the park. That would be six blocks to the zoo.

Mills isn't too far from it.

Mills would come in the other way.

But people did come in their cars?

Oh, yes. Sure. Everybody used the streetcar. I went to Sunday school on the streetcar. My parents went to church at a different time than I went to Sunday school, and all of us kids went downtown and rode the streetcar.

I presume you did your big shopping downtown, in spite of the stores that were out this way?

I just remembered the name of the dry goods shop there, Mrs. Van Arsdale. I had forgotten about her until this second.

For clothing and big items?

Downtown we shopped at Karsten's and at Harry S. Manchester, and before that [unclear]. I can vaguely remember [unclear] when it was on the corner where Wolff-Kubly's big store is now.

Burdick & Murray was around there somewhere.

Burdick & Murray was the store that I'm thinking about. They were the ones that had the money-carrying things that went on the trolley. [Unclear], Burdick & Murray. And there were grocery stores downtown, like the fine Piper Brothers, which was a beautiful grocery store.

They delivered, though, didn't they?

Everybody did. My mother went to the store and picked out her meat and told them what she wanted, but it was always delivered. I worked off and on, weekends and so on, at Jordan's as a delivery boy. Drove a truck and helped the delivery guy. They had a regular route, and especially on weekends they were really busy.

Talking about the streetcar, my father worked every Saturday morning but he got off Saturday afternoon. The girls were gone, I'm ten, twelve, somewhere around there. My mother and I would often go down on the streetcar to Pa's office. We would go to lunch at either the Four Sea Cafeteria... I can't remember where the Four Sea came from. That was on West Washington Avenue. We'd have lunch there and we'd go to the Strand Theater and see a movie and vaudeville. Then also we'd go to the Piper Cafeteria, which was on Mifflin Street.

Where was your father's office?

In the Capitol. In the Department of Public Instruction.

That was a good day.

Then – what fascinates me, as I think about it – we would walk home. That's a long walk, that's three or four miles home. We'd walk unless it was raining or something, and if it was we'd take the streetcar.

It was only a nickel on the streetcar.

A nickel for adults and children. And you could buy tokens and it was even less than that. I think it cost about three-plus cents apiece. Beautiful transportation. They ran a very good streetcar system.

And it ran often, I suppose.

I don't remember, Marie. I couldn't tell you.

Talking about my Dad, I forgot something. My father worked in the north wing of the Capitol, on the second floor. You go in the Capitol today, you can't tell what wing you're on. This is the gospel truth, this is not Shaw hyperbole or Irish bull roar, this is the truth – I never could find the steps.

I used to go downtown to the Y after school. I'd go to the Y and swim or do whatever you do at the Y, and then I'd go to my father's office and come home with him. But I'd always get lost in the Capitol. I picked out which stairway was his, these big wide stairways, and I went out and got a little ball of mud and threw it at one of the grooves, a ball of mud. This is the truth. The Capitol was heated by direct current. They didn't use the city's alternating current system; they had their own light plant down on Main Street. The bulbs never burned out that used direct current so bulbs in the grooves were hardly ever washed. They were never washed. They were dusted with a feather duster or something. That ball stayed there for about a year and then it fell down. But the round mark – it was about the size of a dime – was there for years. Finally my father told Governor Walter Kohler, Senior, he said "I want to show you something. That bulb hasn't been washed since John was about seven." The next day they came and cleaned it.

You must have had pretty good aim if you could hit what you wanted.

They were big globes. They're still the same.

Did you play a lot of ball when you were young?

Basketball was an unknown to us. We played football, which was in the form of touch football,

and we had rival teams. We played the ice house gang, that was certain people. There was a great big Conklin ice house, you know, at Monroe Street and Commonwealth. Huge! An enormous place. And then the Wilkies had their gang. They by then had moved to Forest Street and they had a football team. We had a football team and then the Catholics at St. James.

Was this organized at all?

Just kids. Sandlot. And then we played a lot of baseball. Most of the teams were sponsored, junior leagues and senior leagues, city leagues. They were sponsored.

Did you have uniforms?

No.

No shirts or anything?

Later on. I was as tall as I am now and I weighed about one hundred and forty pounds, so I was a pretty poor athlete. I did make the Madison West High School football team in my junior year, which I was very pleased about.

You're over six feet, aren't you?

Oh, yes. Then I was six-two and three-quarters. But I had gotten interested in plays. I loved plays and was in a lot of them at West. My senior year I went in to tell Louis Jones that I was going to drop football to be in a play. He said "You're going to what?!" He said "You must be out of your mind."

I expect you would have been a great candidate for basketball if they had had it.

I have very poor coordination and I was a terrible basketball player. We had Dick Bardwell, Gene Murphy. We had a good basketball team in those days. I couldn't do it. I was a lousy basketball player. I was very gangly. I was not a good athlete. I was a good swimmer, I was a fine swimmer. Pete, Dr. Oscar Fosside, taught me to swim at Camp Waconda. He had one leg; he lost the right leg in an accident.

Did you go to Camp Waconda regularly?

I wouldn't say regularly, but I went several summers.

For a couple weeks?

Usually two weeks. Then I often got summer jobs, dishwashing or helping in the kitchen, to give me another two weeks.

Did your friends go there too?

Almost all of us went to Camp Waconda. Our rich friends went to Manitowish. Rich, ho, ho, ho! I went to Manitowish one summer as a camp instructor and enjoyed it. I had a wonderful time that year.

All summer?

Not all summer. I would say four or five weeks.

So you canoed. Did you have your own canoe?

Oh, no.

I just wondered. You said you crossed Lake Wingra in boats.

No, we had rafts. Bill Hurley and Bob Hummel built flat-bottom rowboats. Bill Harley and somebody else built a boat and took it up to the Wisconsin River and went all the way down to St. Louis on the boat that they built. But these football and basketball games, those were fun games. We had no referees or anything like that, but they were very, very spirited.

Where did you play?

Vilas Park. And when we played the Wilkie gang, those terrible Wilkies over there – that would be Ed and Mack and Jack, the whole family, Frank, Junior [unclear] – we played on one of the pastures at the University farms. That was another of our favorite playgrounds, the university barns. We played hours over there.

In the summertime we went swimming. We didn't swim in Lake Wingra because there was no beach. We went to [unclear]. We'd walk from my house a couple of miles. We had stops on the way.

Did you have bikes?

We all had bikes. I loved bikes. I had two or three of them.

I wondered if you went over there by bike.

Often we walked. Everybody walked everywhere, see? It was common. It was over a mile to go to Randall School. We came home for lunch and went back in the afternoon, so that's about four miles a day.

But you did ice skate at Lake Wingra?

Hours and hours and hours. We had skate sails and skated. Had the most wonderful kids' experience. It was wonderful! How do I describe this? The Fauerbach family – this is the Fauerbach Brewery – built a lot behind the park. Two Fauerbachs married Nielsen girls. They were the prettiest things you ever saw. They were beautiful women, girls. But [unclear] never did put his name on this.

He was a photographer here in Madison, [Edward C.] Nielsen. He loved kids. He lived at the [unclear] Fauerbach's house. He loved kids and he built all kinds of things with all kinds of boys and girls. He had a Madison-style iceboat, a small model. Do you know what a Madison iceboat is? It's the fastest iceboat ever built in the history of man. He had a small model of it. There were only about ten of them ever built and there's only three still in existence today, 1985, that I know about. Two of them burned not too many years ago.

He took us ice boating on Lake Monona, Lake Wingra, and on Lake Mendota occasionally. He had what he called the "Fauerbach shack." It was out on Six Mile Creek, on the other side of Lake Mendota. That was a duck hunting shack. He took the kids out there and showed us different kinds of ducks, different kinds of grasses. He was very interested in nature.

He was the photographer?

He was the photographer.

When did he find time to do this?

Well, he was retired. Of course, then we had Camp Waconda. I was selected to go to Lake Koshkonong to meet a wonderful old man who Bob would remember. He was a self-taught naturalist at Koshkonong. His name is gone from me at the moment. We opened up an Indian

mound, legally, legitimately, and found some interesting things in it. I'm amazed, now at sixty-eight – I'll be sixty-nine next week – I had all kinds of experience working in natural things at the time and I didn't even know it.

You were exposed to it.

I was exposed to this. Incidentally, I just happened to notice this because I was looking something up the other day. In 1930 the *Wisconsin State Journal* gave my father an award – there was a picture in the *Wisconsin State Journal* – for the work that he and another man, whose name I can't remember – Drury, I think it was – they had done in making people conscious of the birds in Madison and how important it was to the community. He was given something like his picture in the *Journal* and some honorable mention for it. I had kind of forgotten that my Dad was interested in that.

I was going to ask you where you started getting interested in birds.

My real interest came when we were married, Barb and I, forty-three years ago. One of our presents for our wedding was a honeymoon cottage on the Lake Michigan shore which belonged to a friend of my sister Evelyn's. It sits up on top of the wonderful, wonderful bluffs, just out of Kewaunee. There was a cottage down below that belonged to friends of hers. She owned a great big double garage and then she put a second story on it and had this little tiny cottage up on top of the bluff so that you're looking right into the trees. We were married in June. She and Barbara and Peg Swenson, also old Madison people, used to take Barbara before we were married and they went birding every spring. They sat on this deck of this wonderful place and looked at the birds. Just a marvelous place for birds. Still is. We've been there many, many times. That was her wedding present to us and that's where I got intrigued over the fact that there were a lot of birds.

But you must have known and been exposed to this, a latent interest.

Colonel Joseph Jackson, for whom the Jackson Oak in the Arboretum was named, his son Joe was probably, as a young boy, my closest friend. Joseph William Jackson III was, I would almost say, a cripple. He wasn't a cripple. He had a disease where his bones were very brittle and he couldn't do a lot of things that the rest of us could.

The Jacksons, the whole Jackson family – this is Dr. Rich, Dr. Jim, Dr. Arnold and, of course, Joe "Bud" Jackson – they were all known to me and to my family, and my father and Dr. Reg Jackson, Sr. were close friends. Arnold Jackson lived across the street. The Jacksons were a family... my family was, again, I say this kindly, but we were rather austere. My family didn't laugh a lot.

Of course, you were sort of a child alone in that family.

I didn't have older brothers. The Jacksons lived at 2010 Adams Street. That's exactly one block from us. They had five girls and Joe and they were lively. There were a lot of silly things going on there all the time. The family fascinated me and they were very good to me. It was a reciprocal thing. I mean, they did things that my parents didn't do very much. They went on a lot of picnics. They would go over to the Arboretum and camp out. My family wouldn't be caught dead doing that.

It's a little different if you have six young children and if you have one little boy.

My relationship with Joe – you make it sound like I was kind – was a very happy relationship.

He gave me a new perspective on a lot of things that I didn't have. Furthermore, he was very skilled in radio, which fascinated me. His cousin Reg, Reg Junior, who now is the owner of Second Point, that Dr. Reg had a most fabulous house, Dr. Reg Jackson, Senior's old house on Carroll Street, which is still there and still owned by Reg Junior. He had the whole third floor that was nothing but, I won't say toys, but he had train sets, he had all kinds of things. The whole floor was devoted to Doug as he was then known, and it was fascinating. Joe had an entree to this magic land of electric trains.

Things kids enjoyed. Like our kids wanted to go to friends who had television.

The same concept. I had a radio in my room for years before my family had a radio. They didn't have a radio. I remember that they bought an RCA Super [unclear]. I can see it, and I'd know it. If you brought it in the room with ten just like it I could pick ours out. We didn't have one of those for years. We couldn't afford it. Now, I don't know how poor we were.

It was becoming popular to have those. It was Depression time. It was years before we got a little Atwater Kent, I remember.

You see, I am not conscious ever in my life that I couldn't get something. We were talking earlier about a bicycle that I had. Yes, I had one, but I wanted one for an awful lot longer than I got it. I got it because my Grandpa Shaw went with us. We went to the Hessman Bicycle Shop on University Avenue. I can smell it and see it right this minute. Old Man Hessman. He ran a shoe repair shop and a bicycle shop in one building. I had a bike and it had V-handlebars on it. Oh, I wanted that bike so much. On our way home my Grandpa said "Don't worry, Johnny. We're going to get that bike." I don't know where he got it; he didn't have any money either. He was in real terrible straits. Someway or another I ended up with that bike. That was one of the great joys of my life, that bicycle.

My grandfather was very important to me. He was a great storyteller.

He had time to pay attention to you.

He paid a lot of attention to me in his own way.

And he listened to you, probably.

He listened. We gardened. He helped my grandmother plant things in the garden – again, this is not his wife.

Did he play any card games with you?

The cards came later in my life, with my mother's interest in bridge. We never played cards. We had – I can't remember, I've seen them – the thing they shot holes in the corners.

Carom?

Carom. We had one of those. But we didn't play cards.

Well, did you play things like Parcheesi and checkers?

Checkers.

Grandfathers are sometimes good at that.

He was a marvelous whittler; he could whittle things. He and my great-uncle Willy Thompson would go down to the park and get a willow stick, a live willow, and they'd take it home and whittle a chain out of it. It was incredible! My uncle Willy Thompson was the last surviving

member of... he was a veteran of the War Between the States [Civil War]. My Grandfather, Grandpa John, signed up, but they found out he was only fifteen and they wouldn't let him in. He worked on the trains. He worked as a flagman, I think, on the trains that the troops were on. For a few years he worked on the Burlington [Railroad].

I was going to ask you if you had a Victrola at home?

No.

You didn't? Your sisters didn't get to dance around the house?

They danced. They were very [unclear], Merle was a Badger [unclear] and Evelyn was the... I shouldn't say this, she was a very bright girl. She was the grind of the family, the straight-A type. I remember once she got a B and it almost finished her off.

Did they bring their friends home?

Oh, yes. Yes.

Did you have a piano?

Yes. Evelyn and Merle played it and I took lessons.

So there was a lot of singing and that sort of thing?

Yes. And I remember they had whistles. We also had two roomers a lot of the time. One or two. Al Rand was with us for several years. A very brilliant young man.

Did they eat with you?

Oh, no. God, I had forgotten about Margaret. Margaret Johnson was in the Department of Vocational Education. She was a dietician and traveled all over the state. She was only with us on weekends. She lived with us for years, I think. I don't know where we all slept. I can't quite remember that. We only had four regular bedrooms and then another room that could be sort of made into a bedroom. Plus this great huge wonderful space in the attic.

You didn't get to be up in the attic, though? You had your own room?

I had my own room until my grandfather became ill, and then I think I probably stayed...

People did double-up a lot in those days. And having roomers was a very common way.

It was a very common way. Al Rand was a great guy. Ed Manner was another one I remember. I haven't thought of these names for years. Al Rand was a gymnast of some repute. I believe he was a Big Ten champion gymnast.

Did he stay with you while he was in school?

Yes. That would be two or three years.

And summers he would have been gone?

Summers he'd be back. He was of the Ingersoll-Rand family of machinery, pneumatic drill machinery type thing. Very bright guy. I will never forget one time he said "John, get your mother out here. I want to show her something." I went and got Ma. "Al wants to show you something." He climbed a telephone pole over here and one over here and he went hand-over-hand on one of those big telephone cables. I thought my mother was going to have a stroke.

Well, I imagine you enjoyed having a big fellow in the house.

I don't remember them particularly. Oh, I do, too. I remember one time how I lost Santa Claus. I was a great believer in Santa Claus. We were then living on Madison Street. I have forgotten about Madison Street. We were waiting for the deal on Adams Street to be closed. We rented a house temporarily on Madison Street next to the McGowans, which is where Merle and Murray met. Santa Claus was going to bring me a new flexible flyer, a sled. Anybody that doesn't know what a flexible flyer is shouldn't be listening. Santa Claus sent it down the hill and everybody said "Oh, see Santa." I was looking for Santa and looking. The flexible flyer hit me right here and pretty near broke my leg. Oh, did it hurt! Al Rand came tearing out from behind the garage where he was sending the flexible flyer. I said "Santa Claus." That was the end of Santa Claus.

That was a wonderful sled.

I still have it. No, Andrew's got it now. They were good sleds.

But you didn't have many hills around there.

Oh, Marie! We had the most gorgeous hills in the world – Lincoln Street and Edgewood Avenue. The city of Madison closed Lincoln Street for us and the neighbors were so wonderful about it. I remember Jerry Simon had to park his car outside. He couldn't get into his own garage because Lincoln Street was closed. Then the Cantwells and Father Bloodgood, all those people. And we'd get out on Jefferson Street, Jefferson, Adams, Vilas, across the road and clear down to the lagoon on our sled. I used to go on those things. Oh, did we slide! Then finally the city took that away from us. We moved to Edgewood.

Yes, Edgewood would be very steep hills.

Leo Crowley had built his building over there. Leo, I suppose maybe Dad, and Bud Jackson and others, said [unclear]. He said "Fine. I think every kid should have a sliding hill. I'll park my car some place else." And he did.

So you could go from Edgewood on to the lake.

Way down on the lake.

Gee! And never break any teeth doing that?

Came within an ace of getting killed once. I hit Dave Leider. He was going one way and I was going another. We collided. Got some terrible cuts. Dave had a badly broken arm from that.

So you belly-flopped, I suppose.

Did we ever! It was a wonderful place for kids. There were lots of kids there.

That sounds like a wonderful situation with all those boys. I suppose there were some girls in the neighborhood, but you didn't pay much attention to them.

I was very fond of them. I was very fond of the Jackson kids. Mary, Maureen – the most beautiful things I ever saw in my whole life. Then next door were the McCoy girls. I'm talking too much, I think.

Absolutely not! This is really interesting. I wonder if you walked to school with the boys?

We walked together.

In grade school. And in high school you probably got sort of interested in girls.

We got interested in girls. I don't recall being too uptight about girls before high school. I do remember going to parties. Dorothy Denison always had parties and Rebecca Clark always had parties.

What kind of parties?

Costume party type things. I remember being very embarrassed.

For Halloween?

I don't really remember. I do remember that some of the kids would come with rented costumes. I was very uptight about that because I could never come up with that.

You'd have to be a tramp or something.

No. I remember I once came as [Charles] Lindbergh. I was just using my leather cap and so on. I can remember with girls that Janet Nelson was the prettiest girl in the whole world. We would all sit around in her yard waiting for her to show up. That didn't come until high school. In high school I was absolutely madly in love with Elizabeth Ann Malley, Mrs. Chickering.

Oh. When you had these parties at their homes, these were obviously boy-girl parties?

Yes.

What did you do?

They were usually pretty well organized and, of course, always somebody in attendance.

Were they dancing parties? Or did you play games?

No, game parties. I remember at Denison's, Mrs. [Grace] Denison used to arrange music and we would dance. I think we did some round dances and square dances. They were quite organized. Then we always knew when it was time to go home because she would play "Good Night, Ladies." Mrs. [Ada] Cockefair, who was a teacher for many years, her daughter Mary Louise had parties. I never had one. My mother couldn't...

Well, I think girls are more apt to have them anyway. You didn't go to dancing school?

Oh, Lord no.

There were a few young boys who did.

Not of my friends. We would have ostracized them something terrible.

Were there high school parties? Proms?

Not so much. There were after-school dances. Then, of course, Tri-High, remember? There were high school sororities. One of my early tragedies was that by then I was going with Barbara and Barbara didn't get invited. She was blackballed by Tri-High and couldn't get in. This was a pretty glum weekend for us because we used to love to go to those parties. But I was not a good dancer. Again, this sort of ties in with this inability to be an athlete. I was always kind of a hanger-around at parties. I wasn't good at that.

But you were a good conversationalist.

I tried. And we did a lot of things. We played lots of games, and we played "Guess who I am" type games. Charades. We were good at that. We were very active. During high school we were involved in plays, we were involved in athletics. Barbara and I were in plays together.

You didn't sing?

Oh, sure. Barb was an alto. She was in a triple trio and we were both in an acapella choir. Yes, we were very active. And a little bit in athletics.

Did you have any church parties?

Church was not really a very important part of my life, to tell you the truth. The only reason I went to church in the later years was because they had a good gym and we played basketball over there. We played those terrible Baptists across the street. We could whoop the Baptists pretty easily.

Our Presbyterian church had quite an active youth society. I've forgotten the name of it.

Christian Endeavor, sure. I was a member of that.

And they even went to summer camps.

I didn't do that. I went to what is now Westminster Church. It's the one on West Lawn Avenue, a pretty little church on West Lawn. I went to that summer Sunday school and a couple of things, Bible school. I always liked the Bible. Instead of having evening prayer where everybody sat around and held hands my grandfather usually read from the Bible. When he didn't my Dad did it.

This is Sundays?

Every evening. Somebody read some verses from the Bible shortly before dinner and a long one after.

Did you have any restrictions as to what you could do on Sundays?

You were to be a little gentleman. No, I was not restricted. We could do pretty much... but not at home. You were to be quiet at home. Merle practiced the piano and that sort of thing.

Did you go to church with your family usually?

I went to Sunday school and they went to church. As a little fellow, I suppose I went to church with them. Sunday school, there was a big bunch of us. All the big churches were downtown and, as a group, the neighborhood group, we would go. Everyone would go on the streetcar. We even knew the... the streetcar driver was a guy named Kurt Kinely. We came home with him. I knew him because my sister knew his sisters. He was going to the university and was a part-time streetcar driver.

We'd come along Breese Terrace and it was with full cars. Madison streetcars were very short and only had four wheels. They didn't have double-track wheels. They were short and the wheels were pretty close together. If you would get about twenty kids on the back of the car you could bounce it. And if you really worked it you could bounce it off the track. I never tried it but some kids did. I can remember soaping the rails, the brakes.

I know I'm wrong, but I'm not, but I can remember walking home from the Strand [Theater], walking down State Street and bouncing, walking on the streetcar rails. I can remember somebody saying "Here comes the streetcar." There was so little traffic.

I remember in 1932, between 1931 and 1932, they ripped up State Street and rebuilt it completely. Took out the streetcar tracks. It was a long, terrible process. I remember so well because I was working at Brown's Book Shop. There were some granite blocks and some not. But up towards uptown they were blocks and they were all ripped. It was a long process. Then

the sewer system was completely and totally inadequate and they had to do the whole thing over. This was all hand done.

I can remember these men, the Italians, worked at this stuff. John Icke was the contractor in town, George Icke's father. Do you know why there are so many Italian kids named John, Philip, and George? Because of the Icke family. Those were the three brothers. The Ickes went to Italy and to Sicily and made real contracts with Italian and Sicilian men to bring them to America. They provided housing for them. They'd bring them to Madison to work as ditch diggers and all the rest. That's why we had such a fine Italian community here: the Ickes went over to Italy and brought them here.

Now, that Italian community was not too far from you, in the Vilas area.

Sure, sure.

So didn't those kids go to high school with you?

Yes. Most of them went to Central. They were very close friends of mine. Tony Canepa was through the camp, the Ichavas. I knew many Italian families.

They weren't ostracized in any way?

Oh, no way at all.

The kids, I suppose, learned to speak English right away.

Well, they were born in America. Their parents couldn't speak English all the time. I went into many Italian homes where Papa and Mama couldn't speak English, and particularly Grandpa couldn't speak English. No, these people were friends of mine. People forget today, in 1985, that Madison was very, very segregated in 1920 and up until about 1930. The Irish lived here, Irish lived in the Fourth Ward. The Italians, Jews, and the blacks were here.

You're saying they were segregated?

Absolutely. It was a fact of life. My mother was pretty shocked with the fact that I used to go to the Canepas. Tony Canepa is still... my close good friend was Chris Canepa. He was a great athlete and a marvelous tumbler. He was tumbling one day in Brittingham Park in some type of a show and he slipped or something and fell and broke his neck and died.

Now your mother would have probably preferred that you didn't...

She didn't care for me to be messing with the Italians and the blacks. I had two good black friends. Alex London was a good friend of mine. Kay Culver was one of my close friends.

I remember – again this hard for me, but I'm sure that I'm right. I remember when we moved to Wingra Park, I'm going to say 1922 at the latest, there was one Jewish family in the whole Wingra Park. They were the Heilprins. They lived on Grant and Jefferson. Slowly and slowly but surely more Jewish families came. First the Sinaikos. I remember when the Franks – that's Sol Frank, who was president of Frank Fruit Company, wonderful, wonderful people – they bought a lot across the street from our house. I remember my father and my mother talking to them. My Dad told us later that Sol said "Do you think the people in the neighborhood will accept us?" "Of course, don't worry about it. We have many good Jewish neighbors." My father had many black friends in Madison. He was very liberal in the most broad sense of the word.

Was the Triangle area there then?

Absolutely.

But that was a little different class than the Wingra Park Italians.

Oh, no. The Italians all lived in the Triangle. They all lived on the other side of Park Street. Sure.

They did live in the Triangle? They would have gone to Central then. How did you meet them then?

Through the Y. Tony Canepa was one of my first good friends. Parisis, many of them. Through basketball games and football games, this sort of thing. That was a very important part of our lives. We all participated.

Were you quite a student?

No, I was a poor student. I always got by.

But you weren't the bookish type?

Oh, no. I'll say I wasn't. I never really applied myself, ever. In high school or college, which is too bad. I should have but I didn't.

You were having a good time doing a lot of other things.

I was getting by and wasn't in any trouble.

And you had time for all these other activities.

I'd like to go back to the Franks. The Franks built this very nice home, right across the street from our house. When they moved in my mother had, I won't say a tea, because they didn't have teas in those days, but she invited the neighborhood to come and meet Mrs. [Rose] Frank. Three women didn't show. One of them was a close neighbor friend and my mother never spoke to that woman again. Never. She never forgave her for the fact that she didn't come to meet Mrs. Frank, when she knew she was home, she was there. She was not going to come and meet any of those Jewish folk. There was a lot of that, a lot of prejudice and a lot of segregation.

And there was a lot against the Catholics in those days, too.

This was never discussed. My family never talked about religion and they never talked about sex. Anything between your knees and your neck was never, ever brought up. It was shameful.

Well, it was a kind of reserve and it just wasn't polite.

It wasn't done. Looking back and thinking of how long they waited before they got this house in Wingra Park, I really believe they were having trouble getting the house because people thought they were Irish Catholics. I think this – Shaw, Irish. And Andrew McCoy, who was our next-door neighbor, he had a terrible time getting a house there. He was Catholic. But in my lifetime, I remember clearly a very terrible prejudice against Jews. I remember Kay Cohn's father ran an apparel store on West Washington Avenue, down in the Bush, strictly a working man's store. He used to talk about the terrible prejudices against Jews.

Well, there were very few of them in Madison.

Not too many. I remember some beautiful things. McCoy's girls were... we always called her "Sister Agnes." She should have been a nun. She was very Catholic. She used to run the school, always had six steps and the six steps were the grades, Sister Agnes. Sol Frank came home early one afternoon. He looked over and one of the boys was crying. I don't know if it was Hallie or

which one, but one of his younger sons was crying. He said "[unclear] the stations of the Cross." Sol almost had a fit.

The neatest part of the story was that that Christmas Sol invited all the neighborhood children over and he brought home some special fruit and candy from the store. They owned Frank Brothers grocery store. He brought nuts and candy and whatever and he explained the Festival of the Lights. I've never forgotten that. I saw Sol just before he died. He just died a few years ago. We were talking about the old days in Wingra Park. He said "I remember the time we talked about the Hanukkah, you know."

Well, I suppose at high school you knew a lot of university professors' children.

They lived primarily on the west side, many of them in Wingra Park. George Wagner lived in the Park. I knew Bob, your husband, had a terrible problem. Bob had a problem with George Wagner. Bob came to register with George Wagner in the school department. "I want to do this and the other. " George looked at him and said, [unclear], and Bob never forgave him for that. I told Bob that George trapped and his house was kitty-corner behind us and I didn't like that, that I didn't like the birds in the traps. I'd get up real early and I'd sneak over and let them out. George finally caught me and he was just furious.

Did you think he was hurting the birds?

I don't know what I thought. I just thought it was terrible to trap birds so I went over and let them out.

You probably remember the names of some of your high school teachers.

A few. Margaret O'Neill was my homeroom teacher. Barbara would remember them better than I. We all had the same teachers. Bob Hurd was our gym teacher.

Who was the principal?

Volney Barnes.

He was there a long time, wasn't he?

Too long. Christy. I was very fond of [Ralph] Christoffersen. I had math courses under him. Volney Barnes I didn't care for at all. He kicked me out of school. Very unjustified. Today, of course, my father would have sued him.

I took a lot of shop courses because I enjoyed them. I took printing. One of the things I was assigned to do was to print the activity tickets, football tickets. They were numbered and so on, and a group showed up missing. It was my fault because I did this, I was responsible for them. Volney Barnes didn't give me a hearing or a damned thing. He said "If those tickets don't show up you're out." Just like that. That's the kind of a man he was. He was a real stinker. I didn't know what to do.

I went home and told my Dad. He said "Did you steal them?" I said "I certainly did not." He said "Well, let's wait a day or so." I said "What will I do?" He said "Do nothing. If you can, try to find out." So I got some of my pals looking around. Never found anything. Finally after about the third day, the second or third day, Pa said "Did you hear anything from Barnes?" I said "No." He said "We're going to go see him." And he did. He was pretty short and to the point. He said "The way you've treated my boy is entirely wrong. Put him back in school or I will take it up with the Department of Public Instruction, where I work." I got back in.

Not too long later Lloyd Bentsen, who was my teacher, found out who took them. I think

I've still got the letter Volney wrote, apologizing to my Dad, not to me. They had been taken by one of the kids taking print shop. Lloyd Bentsen caught them.

I remember teachers in Randall School – Miss Stands, Miss Hinrichens. And Eve Wilson at Madison West High School, I remember her very well. She was my Latin teacher.

I thought she taught at Central?

She did, but she retired. She was a wonderful teacher.

Who were some of the others of your grade school teachers?

Miss [Hazel] Teasdale, Miss Stams, Miss [Helen] Fosbinder. Lillian Gaylor Jones, I loved her. She was marvelous.

But who was your principal at Randall?

Florence Dodge. Wonderful, wonderful. She was a great teacher. She never should have been a principal. She should have stayed a teacher.

She wasn't the sixth grade teacher, too?

She may have been. I don't recall. You see, when I went to Randall School it went through the ninth grade. That was because West [High School] wasn't quite finished. Our class was the first class to move into West High School. Ed Wilkie was before ours. They went in in the fall and we went in in February.

What year?

Well, we graduated in 1934, so work that out. 1930. Oh, were we impressed! And was it beautiful! And we were happy that we didn't have to go to Central. It was a pretty tired old school. They kept us an extra semester at Randall. I don't know how they did it. Florence Truesell used to let me drive her car. Ethel Schneider Longslow. The names are coming back. I was in many plays at West High, five or six, and I loved it. I enjoyed it thoroughly. I was on stage crews.

And who directed the plays?

Ray Wilken and Ethel and [unclear] Rachel [unclear].

What were the plays? Do you remember any of them?

"The Swan," "Merton at the Movies."

Were you Merton?

No, I was the director because I knew where I could find a pair of director's boots.

They weren't terribly serious ones, then, I take it.

"Miss Lulu Bett," "Pirates of Penzance."

Oh. Some operettas too, then.

One or two. I never had a lead, a singing lead. Didn't have a strong enough voice. But I had small parts.

Those were marvelous days. You didn't have to lock your doors. Right off of Adams Street there was a great big hall. It was sort of separate, with sliding doors that went in and a big huge kitchen and great big bath, a great big porch on the back, a great big dining room. The key to that

house was always in that little hall window. Never built houses to be locked.

Madison was pretty small city, really, in those days.

Yes. It was such an interesting, pleasant life in some ways. I'm thinking of police stuff. At Randall School the crossing guard – and they had crossing guards in those days – his name was Bill Caneen, a city policeman. We were doing something naughty – I don't know what we were doing, I can't remember – on the bridge, across the street at Randall School, Spooner Street. We were doing something we weren't supposed to do. Bill Caneen said "What are you doing?" He said "Hold out your hand" and he belted me with that club, his billy club. "Don't ever do that again." Boy, we were afraid. He let us know that he wasn't going to put up with any nonsense.

Then summers you said you went back up to your grandmother's.

We did two things. We went first to Pierce County. We took my grandma home. The teachers had moved out, or whoever lived there back then. Then my mother and I went across the state to Door County on the train. We drove up because we had to haul Grandma and all. My Dad would come back home and then my mother and I went across to Door County, where she stayed in Ephraim every summer. She had terrible, terrible hay fever. She stayed there every summer for years.

And did you stay?

Yes.

Was this in a boarding house?

No, we had a cottage. Every year, in Ephraim.

Were there other people you knew there who had cottages?

We knew a fair number of people.

How did you happen to get a cottage there?

They took Mother all kinds of places so she could have some relief. Door County turned out to be the place. I remember we went to Trout Lake, and one summer we went to Crandon. What was interesting and fascinating was that they finally learned that she was allergic to horse dander. It wasn't hay fever at all. There weren't very many horses in Door County, for some reason, and that's why she was better there. Once we found out what it was she had some shots and it was taken care of. But just think, she was raised by a horse breeder! Terrible.

I didn't realize that you had been up there. And you owned that cottage?

Oh, no. We rented the same cottage. If you're familiar with Ephraim, it's now a little book shop in Ephraim, right off Main Street. We were in that cottage every summer.

So was that right on the water?

No. Couple blocks from the water. But I had a free run of the town. I loved Ephraim.

Did you like being there, or would you rather have stayed with your friends?

No, I would rather stay there or in Ellsworth. I had many good friends there. I loved Ellsworth.. That was a great place, a great town.

But I would think it would have been hard to leave your friends.

This is when I was little, a little boy. The first time we went to Ephraim I probably was either four or five. I was just a little boy. We have pictures. My mother's pictures have disappeared off the face of the earth. I don't know what happened. I really regret it because we had some wonderful Door County pictures that I would love to have today. Speaking of who we knew in Door County, one of the families we knew were the Trusslers, and that's [unclear] establishment today. I can remember going to Grandma Trussler's when I was just a little baby boy. I don't remember how.

This is Marie McCabe interviewing John Shaw, the second part of his interview, on February 20, 1985. I think we left off where you and Barbara were still in high school and were about to graduate. I wonder what you did after your graduation that summer.

First, we graduated in February and we were the last class to do that. We both went to what is now Madison Area Technical College. We went there for one semester, just to fill in our time. Couldn't get a job. All through the last two years of high school, I had worked part-time at Brown's Book Shop on weekends and sometimes after school, which was very fortunate for me. Mr. Emory, the owner of Brown's, lived just across the street from us.

What was his full name?

Lyndon King Emory. You know Dr. Robin Allen? She's the only one left. She is his baby daughter, Lyndon King Emory's daughter. Brilliant, great old guy. Mathematical genius. He could do any figuring that I could ever come up with and do it in his head just bang. An incredible man.

And he ran Brown's Book Shop?

He owned and operated Brown's Book Shop for many, many years.

Was the Co-Op there at that time?

Yes. Sure, it was. The Co-Op started in 1892 and Brown's started in 1911. Mr. Emory came there in 1919 or 1920, somewhere around in there, and bought it as the sole proprietor.

Were they about the same size at that time?

No. The Co-Op was bigger, and then as time went on the Co-Op became more of a department store. By 1933 the old Co-Op went bankrupt and Brown's kept on going. Then I worked at Brown's for a good many years on a full-time basis. The roles were exactly reversed of what they are today. Brown's was the big store and the Co-Op was incidentally a book store, but they were a gift shop and a women's department and a men's department and so on with sporting goods, office supplies, everything but textbooks.

So in the fall that year you went to the university?

Went to the university.

With most of your friends?

Everybody. Most of our friends stayed here. Very few of our friends went away to school.

And you lived at home the whole time?

Lived at home. Barbara lived at home and I lived at home.

And what were you planning to major in?

Education. There was no question about that in my mind. I planned to be a teacher. I hoped to get into high school administration, which my father had been in much of his life. That's what I wanted to do. There wasn't any question about it. Then I got waylaid and got off in all kinds of strange areas.

When was it you started the university? You graduated from high school in?

I really don't know, but I think in January of 1933. We started at the university in the fall of 1934, but Barbara says we were in the class of 1937, so maybe it was a year earlier. I can't remember. I don't know. I have never looked it up.

So this was Depression time?

You bet!

What was the tuition? Do you remember?

My tuition the first year was $21.50. When it went to $27.50 it was a minor disaster. Very inexpensive to go to school.

So you couldn't afford not to go.

In the community in which I lived and the friends I had everybody went to the university. It was very unusual not to.

And that was the kind of job you wanted to get?

Well, it was what I always assumed that I was going to do.

What was it like in the Depression days? Everybody poor? Or were there some pretty flashy people?

No, there were very flashy types. I don't remember anybody... I had no friends who had money. Everybody that I knew worked or had to work. I had one – Robby Shaw, a fifty-fifth cousin, a shirt-tail relation, from Milwaukee, his grandfather had money. He was a fraternity brother of a guy I knew pretty well. He had some money. Gene Geoedgen was another man who had some money. These were all fraternity brothers. But they were the only ones. All the rest of us struggled.

You had enough to join the fraternity, though.

My grandmother gave me enough money to pay my initiation fee, my Grandma Nelson. I'm sure it hurt her, but she knew I wanted to join and so she gave me that money.

Did you spend a lot of time at the fraternity?

No, no, I didn't. Again, I lived at home. I used it as a job. I stayed there over the holidays and kept the furnace going and got paid for that. For a little while I worked in the kitchen for my room and board so I could eat lunches down there, sometimes dinner. I had all kinds of jobs. I worked as a cab driver, I worked at Brown's.

My best job while I was in school was that in my sophomore year I had the great good fortune of taking a course under Harry Harlow. He knew my financial difficulty. I was a fairly good student and Harry liked me. He got me a job, an NYA job in the monkey lab, which I had for almost two years.

He's the psychologist?

Yes, yes. He later became world-famous for his experiments with baby monkeys and their mothers and the absence of their mothers.

In the primate lab.

Right. My job in the primate lab was an NYA job, for which I received from the federal government thirty dollars a month. My job was to feed the monkeys in the morning and feed the monkeys in the evening. I didn't have to clean cages, I didn't have to do anything special. The problem? I had to work seven days a week and I never could be late. Also I had to have a substitute who was approved by Harlow. My problem was consistency, be there every day. But I worked there only about an hour a day, so I made a day's wage for one hour's work and that made me rich.

I had friends... Dick Nelson, I remember, worked in the library and he never liked it. Russ Perot got a job where he worked about four hours a day to get the same dollar a day that I got for one hour.

Yes, yes. I remember twenty-five cents an hour.

It was a very unfair system. Harlow kept me on that job for a long time. I worked at Brown's. I started at Brown's in high school. My sister Merle worked there. She was the trade book buyer at Brown's for many years before I came there.

And what did you do there?

The first job was cleaning books. In those days you erased books. You never sold a book with any crib notes in it. They had to be erased or you couldn't sell them. That was the rule of the university, back in the days when rules were enforced. If you had a cribbed language book they took it away from you and made it stick. So I cleaned textbooks. We had a machine that cleaned the edges of the textbooks so they looked nice and fresh and clean. Then gradually I got up so I was working on the floor. I was a stock clerk for a while and I worked in the supply department. Ultimately, after working there five years, I became manager of the textbook department, which was a big job – the important job of the store.

Did that mean you ordered books?

Yes. I managed the textbook department: ordered the books, stocked them, and took care of them. I left in 1939 because his son Allen and I didn't get along very well. I was very aggressive in what I was doing and so was Allen and we locked horns along the way. Lyndon came and said "It just seems to me it would be better for all of us if you went your merry way." So I did. I ended up at Berkeley, a California book company, which is a long story.

You went out to California? You mentioned that you did not graduate and that this was because you were offered this job.

When I was in 1938, it must have been 1937, I must be wrong, I must be off a year or something, I was interviewed. Barbara got a job at Edgerton and her salary was $1,040 a year. This was as an art teacher, an art superintendent, not just teacher, a superintendent. I was looking for a job in the same area so we could be close to each other. The only offer that I had that was of any interest to me was one in Janesville, and I was offered about twelve or thirteen hundred dollars. Mr. Emory said if I would stay and work full time for two years he would pay me double what I got offered if I'd start now. I wasn't feeble-minded so I started with him.

That was just before you were to graduate?

Yes. I think it was my senior semester. I was always going to go back and get the degree but never did.

So then you left in about 1939 and went out to California?

Yes.

Where you expected to stay, you told me.

Well, I had it in mind. I liked it very much. I didn't know where I was going when I left. I bought a round-trip ticket on the Milwaukee Road for sixty-five dollars, round trip from Madison to Madison via any route that you wanted to go to the West Coast and back, for sixty-five dollars.

That was coach?

Coach, sure. Sure. I stopped in Missoula [Montana]. I knew Peg Watrous's father was there and I knew him. I thought I'd go see him. I hadn't seen him for a long time. I loved Missoula and that area – the mountains, the big sky country, as they know it today. I said "Can you help me?" He was with Anaconda Land Company. He said "No, I can't get you a job. But I've got a friend up in the mountains who needs help, except he doesn't have any money. You'll get wonderful room and board and nothing else." I was so intrigued. It sounded pretty good to me. I had a little money so I didn't have to have a lot of money.

I went to see the man. His name was George Larson and his wife's name was Alvina. He was a banker who had gone bankrupt. He started this little dude ranch, only it was for fishermen. It was on Swan Lake in Big Fork, Montana. His concept was that fishermen ought to bring their families, their wives and their kids. He had a lodge and eleven or twelve cabins, log cabins, a beautiful place, on the lake. The fishermen would come, bring their families. They had this little, dinky dude ranch – horses and ponies and stuff for the kids and for the wives – and this beautiful lodge where they served dinners.

It must have been a treat.

I had a wonderful time. I went to work on the fourth of July. My pay was room and board and a pack of cigarettes a day.

And all the skies you could drink in.

All the skies I could soak up. I worked in the morning. He was digging a trench up the mountain to bring water down from a big spring that had been dammed up for fire protection. Gravity coming down the hill would give it enough pressure. I worked on that in the morning, and then around mid-afternoon I came down from the mountain and worked for Mrs. Larson in the kitchen. I was the salad boy and the [unclear].

That lasted all summer, I suppose?

I stayed there until Christmas, just before Christmas. I stayed to help them finish the chore that he had started and because I was enjoying myself. Then I got back on my train and wandered around some more and ended up in Berkeley. By that time I had used up most of my money and I had to get a job.

There were eight book stores in Berkeley, as opposed to only two here. I knew most of them, because I had known of them when I was running the text department at Brown's. I just went up the street. Started here, and walked up Telegraph Hill and ended up... I wasn't having any luck. Nobody was hiring anybody and nobody was interested. I finally got to the California

Book Company. There was a guy outside sweeping the walk and kind of cleaning up. I asked him "Do you work here?" He said "I'm working." I said "Do you think they might have an opening?" "I haven't any idea." I said "Well, this is a pretty good store, as I recall." I told him I had worked at Brown's. I said "We used to buy and sell a fair number of books back and forth here." He said "I guess maybe you did." He said "I don't know, I really don't know about that." I said "Well, do you think it would do any good to go in and see the boss?" He said "I don't know. Just go in and ask and see what you can do. I wouldn't have any idea. Go in. There's a stairway back there. Go upstairs and ask for the bookkeeper. Her name is Mrs. Zip. She'll see if she can get you in."

I went in and saw Mrs. Zip, Dorothy Carolyn Zip. She looked at me kind of funny, but she said "Well, if you want to talk to him, you can. He's in his office." I walked in. There, of course, was the guy that I had been out talking to, sweeping the sidewalk. He turned out to be the best friend in the book business I ever had. A wonderful man.

I worked for him at that store in Berkeley. He had three stores in Berkeley and I worked in two of them. That was at Christmas time. Then in the spring he offered me a job managing a store in San Jose [California]. I took that job. That was a very nice job. I liked it. I was there two years. Then I got drafted. Uncle Sam came along and got into my affairs. I hadn't been home for quite a long time. I thought "Geez, I'd better get home before I do really get drafted."

I came home then. As it turned out I didn't get drafted. I was deferred for a great variety of reasons. I ended up working at A. O. Smith in Milwaukee during the war. After the war, I came back and, as I told you, I came back to Brown's.

When did you get married in all this?

1942.

Barbara was still teaching in Edgerton?

Still teaching, sure.

She was probably glad to have you come back?

You'd have to ask her. I don't know.

Well, you still had an attachment.

We were more surprised than a lot of people were because I hadn't seen her for two years. We did communicate, we did talk. She had a gentleman friend and I had a lady friend in California, a beautiful girl, Marjorie Surreal, whom I was very fond of. But we kept communicating with each other.

If the war hadn't come along, things might have turned out differently.

Could easily have been. I came back to Madison. I arrived on Mother's Day. I don't know what day that is. It's in May, isn't it?

Yes. The second Sunday of May or something.

My mother was pretty startled to see me because I hadn't seen her in a couple of years. One of the things I always did when I was away was I always wrote once a week. I can't remember, because I haven't written a letter since, I don't think, but I always wrote to Barbara and I wrote to my mother.

Only cost about five cents a letter.

I don't know. Three cents, I think. I met Barbara at a depot. I was meeting somebody else and they didn't show. Barbara was there. I said "Well, let me take you home." I got home in Madison I think it was Mother's Day, or just before Mother's Day, and we were married on the fifteenth of June, so it picked up awful fast. I don't know. It was a very strange proposal. We had been going out a little bit. I said "Why don't we stop this monkey business and get married and stop all this fooling around?" She kind of laughed. She said "Maybe that's a good idea. Okay." She told her mother and her mother was very happy about it, and so was her Dad. I came home that night and told my mother. I said "This is something you might be interested in. I proposed to Barbara and she accepted it." My mother's comment was "I'm glad you finally came to your senses."

In my experience at A. O. Smith I worked through the Navy, a Navy employee. I worked at A. O. Smith in the torpedo division, where they manufactured the torpedo shells. Very fascinating and a very illuminating and wonderful experience. It was a wonderful place. I enjoyed it very much. It was just enough Navy so I got a little flavor of how horrible the Navy was.

Why did you quit there?

The war was over. We were all done. I stayed there until 1945.

And Barbara lived there, too?

Oh, yes. She lived there. We had an apartment on Capitol Drive. She worked there, too. I worked nights and she worked days.

She gave up her teaching? Well, they didn't really hire married teachers.

Married teachers were out in those days.

That's right. If you got married you were out.

No. She worked in the tool design department as a draftsman and I worked in the machine shops.

I expect they paid pretty good wages, didn't they?

I didn't make much. Barbara did better than I did. Because I was a Navy employee I got the difference between Navy pay and the average pay of the department, so I didn't do too terribly well. But we got along. We had a nice little apartment. But we didn't do anything, because, as I say, I worked nights and she worked days. What a terrible life. There was one stretch where I worked over three hundred consecutive days, every day. It was interesting. Then I came back to Brown's. I didn't like the new owner, so I went across the street and I took a temporary job at the Co-Op.

You said the new owner was?

Merle Gribble. He since has became a great friend of mine, a good friend. A nice guy, a great guy. But he didn't know anything about the book business. I just sort of stepped in where I left off, as before. He just said "We're not going to do it this way." I said "Okay, fine. Do it your way. I'll go somewhere else."

What happened to Mr. Emory?

He was selling out. He wanted to be out. He was retiring. He was in his late seventies by then. He was tired of it.

And his son didn't want it?

They all left. The book business is not the most lovely business. It's hard work. Well, I can tell you what's wrong with the book business in two quick sentences: book business is the only retail business in the world where you, the store manager or owner, your product that you sell, the textbook, is ordered by somebody else, a faculty member, who doesn't have any understanding of the book business. It's not his problem. You buy it from a manufacturer, textbook publishers, who dislike bookstores intensely because we sell used books. They're always after us because we're selling used books. And we sell to a customer who doesn't want to buy the products. Students don't want to buy new books. They hate them. It's a very unsatisfactory relationship with our customers. It's not a fun business.

Many stores in the book business have always had, as I always had, the general book department, which is tiring and has nothing to do with the textbook department. Our reason for being is the textbook department, but the fun part was the supply and general book department.

So then you went over across the street, you said.

I worked there temporarily. Worked a few months and I was promoted over my boss' objection. I was promoted by the board over his objection.

Who was your boss at the Co-Op?

Douglas Stewart. Great guy. Just died here about three months ago. Again, another man who ultimately became a good friend, although we were bitter enemies at one point in our career. I was promoted and he objected to it very vigorously, but he couldn't do anything. About three months later he fired me. That was all right with me because it wasn't working out very well.

John Guy Fawlkes was then chairman of the board and came to the house. I had been fired and I had been looking for work. I had written to California and I had done some other things looking for work around here. John Guy came in and he said "You've been hired back." I said "No, thank you, sir. I ain't going back and work for Stewart." He said "You're not going to work for Stewart." I said "What are you talking about?" He said "We're going to open another store and you're going to run it." I said "John, it won't work. That's foolish." He said "Yes, it will." He outlined a good program, how they were going to finance it. It was a pretty good deal. I hadn't found anything else I liked so I took it.

Now, this is when it was on?

University Avenue.

When you went there from Brown's, where was the store?

Corner of State and Lake, across the street from where it is now, where the library is.

Yes. It was on the north side of the street.

Yes, at State and Lake.

So where were they going to open a new one?

University Avenue, right across the street from the hospital. And to make a very long story short, I was there a year and a half and they fired Stewart and hired me to take his place.

I didn't remember that store. It was near Rennebohm's.

I loved that store. It was one of the best stores I ever had. It was a technical book store. We only

had technical books. Then it turned into a little Co-Op and then it didn't work out so well. But it was a good store when we had medical books, engineering books, ag books. On that side of the campus it was a good store. It did very well, made lots of money. It was a good store but it didn't pan out. So then I was hired as manager in 1947 and I retired as president and general manager in 1978. I was there quite a while.

That was a long career. And it was called the University Co-Op at that time?

Always was called the Co-Op. One of the conditions of returning to work for their main store was to change the name because it never was a co-op. It wasn't a co-op from the day it was formed, which was 1892. What it was was a common law trust. Let's not get into that, because nobody knows what I'm talking about.

But those who buy books got a rebate.

Which is wrong. It never should have been operated that way. It was a very peculiar, perverse kind of an operation from day one.

Talking about State Street, I'll tell you how the thing came about. The store has been in seven locations, but by 1908 or 1909 or 1910 it was in the 500 block of State Street where Wehrmann's used to be, where Pic-a-Book is now, as a matter of fact. It was a pretty good-sized store there. The State Street Merchants Society, State Street Businessmen's Club or whatever, determined to put the thing out of business because it was a co-op. They didn't like it. Some how or another they finagled to get a State Street merchant – I can't remember his name now – on the board. He proceeded to do everything he could as a member of the board to put the thing out of business.

Also in 1906 or 1907 another man was elected to the board. His name was Charles Brown and he was an officer of what is now the First Wisconsin. He had done some undergraduate work at Harvard and he knew about the Harvard Co-Op, which is very famous, the most famous bookstore, college store, in the country. Whenever I use the word "bookstore" I'm only talking about textbooks. They're a different breed than all the other bookstores. Brown thought that the university should have an independent bookstore and yet that there should be some control of faculty or somebody, so there's some control. It shouldn't just be a privately operated store.

Nederman was the man, Charles C. Nederman, ran a bookstore. Nederman's was a book and stationery store on the 600 block of State Street. He wanted to put it out of business. It was a pretty crummy operation. Mr. Brown got the bylaws from the Harvard Co-Op, the Yale Co-Op, and the Princeton University Book Store, where he was familiar, and he wrote the trust indenture under which the store operated until 1950.

It was a common law trust and it was operated originally by three alumni and one faculty. Then we added a second faculty member and then he took off an alumnus and added a student. Finally it became two alumni, two faculty, and three students. They were the managers, the owners, the whatever, of the bookstore.

They owned it?

Sure, they owned it. Not a penny of the profit of that store... I'm the only person that's ever earned any profit from that store. Two years I was paid a bonus, based on profit, and somebody threw it out. They said "No, this is a non-profit operation." That store has, over the years, earned a lot of money, and all the money that was ever earned... the reason it became big and good and the reason I was able to do something with it when we finally got it going was all the profit had to be turned back into the business or distributed in the form of rebates. That's where the capital

came from.

That store is worth four million dollars today. Nobody has ever invested a nickel in that store. Not one red cent! It's got a net worth now of three million nine hundred and some thousand dollars, so it's a big business. Almost fifty million dollars worth of business today. It's a big store and a good one. That's how it got started and this is how the thing grew. It got better and better and better.

When did it get moved down to Lake Street?

It moved there in 1928 and it was just most incredibly unfortunate. They couldn't have picked a worse time. It was impossible. If they had had experts planning, if they would have stayed right where they were, they would have made it. The manager's name was Ed Grady. Do you know Bob Grady? He's got lots of family here in town. Ed just got delusions of grandeur and he was going to open this great, big, beautiful new store. A brand new building. They built the thing.

That was the beginning of my problems with the University Book Store. The university built it on the same terms the University Club was. The university agreed to let them use the land for the University Book Store and the old Co-Op and the University Club, but the university kept title to the land. So they built the store, operated it, and brought in new departments. They got a new men's department and some of the finest fixtures that had ever been seen in Madison, in 1927 or 1928. A beautiful store! Beautiful fixtures, beautiful lights, and mahogany fixtures, black walnut fixtures.

It had a balcony, didn't it?

Oh God, it had everything. Yes, it had a balcony. It was beautiful. It was a beautiful store. And then came the old fat Depression and they went bust. Now getting back to State Street, a lot of people have vision on State Street – a lot of them didn't – but Charlie Anderson was one.

This is side two of tape two of the interview with John Shaw. You were talking about State Street.

Charlie Anderson operated a store on the Square, Anderson-Spoule, which is now Spoule & Son. He saw there were no major stores on lower State Street. At one time, in my lifetime, the big corner was not State and Lake. The big corner was the corner of Gilman and State. Wolff-Kubly, the First National Bank was there. You know where Pic-a-Book is? They were right next to it, what used to be the First Wisconsin National Bank, a branch of it. They later moved it to Park and University Avenue. The big business was on Gilman and State.

There were five corners there.

Wolff-Kubly, Lewis Drug, the bank, and Malone's Grocery. They were big operations, big stores, good stores. It was sort of a major shopping center. Oh, and Goeden's Market was there. A major shopping center. The streetcar went down along there. Charlie Andrews saw that lower State Street, the campus end of State Street, which should be where the business was. When the old Co-Op went broke he got... I can't think who used to run Baron's. Joe? Joe Rothschild. Charlie, Joe Rothschild, and Bill Randell came to the Co-Op, which was bankrupt. Frank Ross, the attorney here in town, Ross & Stevens, was trained. We were bankrupt. The old store was bankrupt, literally. We owed, I believe, something over a hundred thousand dollars, which in those days was just insurmountable. We owed everybody! There wasn't anybody we didn't owe.

Now, you were involved in this.

No, oh no. But yes, I too was involved. Let me tell you how I was involved in it. Indirectly I was

involved. I was an employee of Brown's, but I was involved and I'll tell you how. Frank Ross was appointed by the board or by the regents, I can't remember which. Somebody appointed Frank Ross receiver for the bookstore to try to get the creditors to let the thing survive because the university didn't have a bookstore. See, there was no way they had a bookstore. And it was on their land. It was a very complex deal. First he tried to get Brown's to buy it out.

Now, I was working at Brown's at this time. I remember going over with Mr. Emory. We would go through things. He would say "John, you ought to take notes." We could talk. He would talk to me and I would take little notes and we would look around and look around.

Finally he sat down with his son, I assume he did, and with some other people. At that time there was another investor in Brown's, Mr. Follett, Charles Follett of Chicago, and they concluded that it was a hopeless mess. Ed Grady was a wonderful man and everybody loved him. He was a good-natured, handsome Irisher, but he just let everything go to hell. He got snowed. Everything went bad. I helped clean up the inventory after the thing was finally settled.

To make a long story short, Charlie Andrews talked Bill Randell, Joe Rothschild, and somebody else to come in there and take over. Charlie took over the men's department, Rothschild and Baron's took over the women's department. I can't remember who took over the gift department. They paid money, something, for it. They were to lease space from the Co-Op, and then with the money that the old Co-Op got we were to rebuild the book department.

That's where Doug Stewart was hired. This was in 1932. Doug came in. He was just exactly like I was twenty years later. He was going to school and didn't have any money, was scratching and trying to make a living. They offered him the job to run this store and get it going He worked like a stevedore. He did wiring, he cleaned, he rebuilt fixtures. He did everything all by himself. No help. He kept two employees, Eddie Toppleman, long since dead, and Chet Kretschmann. Do you know Chet Kretschmann at The Hub?

Those three men tried to hold this thing together. Chet gave up. He said "I can't stand this any longer." Charlie put him to work. Joe Rothschild moved Bill Randell in and kept him going. The Yosts were involved some way. I don't know, but I don't remember exactly. In a couple of years they kind of got the thing put together.

There was a third store at that time, Gatewood's. [William S.] Gatewood had a pretty good store next to the Co-Op. He was from Texas. He didn't like it here – it was too cold in the wintertime – and he wanted out. The deal was that Brown's and the Co-Op were to buy out Gatewood's and split the stock. The problem was that the Co-Op didn't have any money and Charlie wouldn't put up any money. He had put up as much as he could put up. The bank was into this pretty heavy, too. They had a terrible time.

My job was – this is the God's truth – my job, assigned to me, a sixteen-year-old, fifteen-year-old, seventeen-year-old kid, was to follow the Co-Op employees around to see that they didn't get more than their half of the stock. We bought the stock, Brown's and the Co-Op bought it. For fifty books we each got twenty-five. And if there were two hundred pencils we each got a hundred. I was supposed to go around and check on the Co-Op employees, and then the Co-Op had employees checking on Brown's employees.

Now, the library was in the Historical Society at that time.

The library didn't exist.

So there was no university library? What other buildings were there besides?

Well, next to us was the Taylor Building. That housed Fred Lohmaier's Bar and a typewriter shop. This was on State Street, next to our store, 712 State Street. And then next to that was the

Campus Soda Grill. Next to that was Ed Olson. That was a men's clothing store.

But what went the other way, from along Lake Street to Langdon?

Well, our store went to the alley. That was 180 feet. Then beyond that there were five rooming houses. On Langdon Street was the university athletic ticket office. Then there was a little park there that went from State Street to Langdon Street at the end of the buildings. Down in there were some typewriter shops and stuff for the lower campus.

Well, was Brown's pretty unhappy about the Co-Op making a go of it then?

I can't speak for Mr. Emory. I never really talked to him about it. They said, Mr. Emory said at the time, "I haven't got enough finances to put this thing together." The big thing that was at issue was what are you going to do with all these men's clothes and the women's clothes and these gifts?

Do you remember a beautiful silver shop in Madison that was up on the corner of Frances and State Street? I can't remember the woman's name. The Mouse Around Shop was the name of it; Mosey Around, but I always called it the Mouse Around Shop because there were so many mice in there. There was the Mosey Around Shop and there was a silver gift shop, beautiful shop. She bought the stock of the old Co-Op and put it into that store up there next.

I was thinking about the textbook part of it. Brown's apparently could not handle the total textbook business.

They wanted to, but they said they couldn't handle the purchase. See, the old Co-Op was a department store, men's clothing, women's clothing, kids', sporting goods, typewriters, office supplies, everything. Incidentally, one little section of textbooks. That was the problem. Ed Grady wanted to have a department store and his base was fundamental: his basic operation was going to be textbooks.

I don't suppose the university really would have given the land for a department store.

Everything went sour. The whole deal went out. I know and believe there was no way that Mr. Emory could create order out of that chaos that was in there. The ultimate solution was the uptown buyers came in and bought the old stock and then put in these lease departments, and then they left less than a third of the store for the old Co-Op to run a bookstore.

Did that have a basement?

Oh, sure. A huge basement. It was a big building.

It seems to me I remember going down to the basement. Right inside the front door.

Oh, sure.

But apparently the store was getting along then during the war years.

Well, during the war years they were one step ahead of the sheriff the whole time.

The university student body was so low.

There weren't any students. Remember, there were NRT's [unclear], B12 students were here, thousands of them. They were here to go to school and they bought books and supplies. The competition between Brown's and the Co-Op and other merchants around town to get that business got down so fine to where they were making less than a half a cent on the dollar. They couldn't possibly... it was all done by bid. It was just terrible. Then there was another group in

here of Army personnel and then there were people from Truax, soldiers, who were going to school on campus. Oh, that was terrible.

And there were WACS and WAVES, I remember.

Yes, everybody. But the book business was a total, complete disaster. This is what broke Mr. Emory's heart. He couldn't cope with this. He said "I've got to get out of this or I'm going to go crazy – if not go bankrupt." Well, everybody held on. Then when the war was over, in the fall of 1945, I came back here and, as I say, I was going to go to Brown's.

The university does not sponsor the bookstore?

In no way, shape, or form.

Except that it does have a couple of faculty people and alumni on the board.

My relationship, my own personal relationship to the University of Wisconsin in the thirty-five years that I managed the store was I submitted one report a year to the president and then to the chancellor and that situation changed. After consultation with the chancellor, he appointed two faculty members for three-year terms. The upshot of it was always that they finally get a faculty member who would accept this crummy job. It wasn't a happy job for the faculty. There was a lot of work and nothing but grief, nothing but complaints. It's like many departmental jobs, you know.

Well, there was no more liaison than that?

That's all.

I remember seeing you at a commencement.

Probably because I was on the public functions committee. I was appointed to be on the public functions committee because we furnished the caps and gowns. I had a huge job at commencement, which was to get everybody in the cap and gown. And my special responsibility was to see to it that the honorary degree candidates were properly housed, properly outfitted, and that their families had a place to stay. I had responsibility for that. I was on the committee for thirty-five years.

This was public functions of the university?

Of the University of Wisconsin. They appointed me.

Because you furnished the caps and gowns?

I had that job for many years. And I was on a couple of other committees, appointed. I was on one of the building committees for a time, and the chancellor appointed me for a few different things, but not because... I had nothing to do with the University of Wisconsin. They didn't pay me, they didn't support the store, except... I shouldn't say that. Ed Young supported the store with everything he had, in many ways, in a time of great trouble.

But the store just leased the land from the university?

Yes, that's all. There was no further connection. Nobody ever understood that. We tried a thousand ways to get people to understand our relationship to the university, including many faculty members.

Well, I'm glad to have that on record, because I certainly never was sure about that.

There's no place like it on the face of the earth.

You weren't appointed an assistant professor or anything?

I had nothing! As I say, I did serve on, I believe, three university committees and two of those were due to Alden White. Two men that I always dearly loved and greatly admired: Alden White and A. W. Peterson. They had minds of their own. They didn't pay too much attention to all this diddly-do hierarchy bit of the university and all. I never realized, but they stick right down the line and it's very clear-cut. Alden didn't pay any attention to that. He said "You ought to be on the public functions committee because you know more about what's going on with caps and gowns and how to organize this thing. Who else knows what color a hood should be? I don't know. Nobody knows. You're the only one around here that knows, so you should be on the committee." He brought me on the committee.

This was just a volunteer service of yours, then.

Sure. Sure. Lord, you don't get paid for any committee work, you know that.

When you took Stewart's place then you started making the place over, did you?

I started all over again. We just started from scratch. Slowly but surely we broke the leases, all the leases I bought out. Baron's sold their interest to Bill Randell, Bill Randell sold his interest to Yost's, and I bought out Yost's. The Co-Op, not I, the bookstore bought out Yost's. We took over the space and kept moving them out. We kept expanding.

You kept making a better and better profit.

I closed Charlie Andrews. We came to a parting of the ways. Charlie refused... well, I won't go into that.

That was a nice store, I remember that.

It was a great store. But I cancelled his lease and I had to. I had to have the space. I bought the Taylor Building next door, which is a nice big building. That was eighty-four feet on State Street, a beautiful building. I bought that building, then Yost's went in there again and I bought them out again. I bought them out twice.

And you had a whole used bookstore there, didn't you?

I had trade books there and my general book department.

So you got bigger and bigger. Of course, the university got bigger and bigger, especially after the war.

So I started to look for space. I knew that – I wish I had these dates a little more clearly in my mind – that in 1970, I think it was really 1969, Pete told me and the chancellor told me that they would not renew our lease on the land.

Now they had built the new library in the meantime.

They built around us, but they didn't build on our space. That was a terrible fight. The library committee and everybody wanted to move us out then but I had an ironclad lease. Thanks to Frank Galsworth Ross it was an ironclad lease and they couldn't break it. That didn't set very well with a lot of faculty.

That got me a lot of enemies on the faculty because we refused to... you see, my position was very strange. I was always the university book store, because faculty didn't understand about

this board. I became, if you were on the library expansion committee, for example, it was "That Shaw! He's the one that ruined the design of the library because he wouldn't give up his lease." So I had some problems. But we had a good lease and we had no place to go.

My other problem was the university promised me, and this was A. W. Peak more than anybody else, who said "John, you will never have to worry about a home. We will find you a home at the proper time."

For one of the sites I came up with, the store offered to buy the University Club, tear it down, put up a new store and put the University Club on top. That was turned down. We offered to build, we made a beautiful offer, beautifully worked out offer to the library committee to leave us where we were and we would put any number of floors on top and buy all the books they wanted for fifty years. We offered that, but that was turned down.

The best offer I made and that was to my friend over there, Halvorsen, when he built Chadbourne Hall. We said "It's insane to use one of the best business corners of the city of Madison, Park and University Avenue, for nothing but dormitories. Let us build the basement and the first two floors and put stores in here. We'll lease them out and we will lease the space ourselves and we'll help you pay for them." "Oh, no, it will spoil the kitchen plan." Crazy! Just crazy! Halvorsen, Donald, said "It would ruin our plan." Less than two years after they built Chadbourne Hall they closed the kitchen.

Then we negotiated long and long and hard for the southeast corner of Park and University, what is now Vilas Hall. We had a beautiful plan there. Jim Hansell worked on it for two years. It was lovely. Again, that went down the tube. We tried to buy where the Church Key is now.

Then finally I got desperate. I was all ready to buy where we were actually meeting our days with the owner, to buy the corner of Frances and State, where McNamara used to be, to buy that building, tear it down and put up a new building. Then the university said that was unnecessary, don't do it, and my board voted it down. I was just heartsick, I just couldn't believe it. For $90,000 we could have bought that whole thing.

All this time, all these years that this was going on, we were negotiating with the Lutheran Church. The Lutherans owned a beautiful piece of property where our store is now. It was pretty empty there: a parking lot and a bunch of junk shops and this little bitty chapel. We finally, after years and years of negotiating, came up with a deal where they gave us the land to use, two-thirds of the land, that is. They allowed us to use two-thirds. They couldn't, because of the deed restrictions, couldn't use all the land. The deal was we would put up the entire building, including the chapel, put it up and pay for it and give it to you in fifty years. It's working beautifully.

Bob heard from a Gruber, I don't know which one, I think the son, that they had sold that land to the Lutherans with the proviso that it would never be a bookstore.

And it never will be, except now that the proviso has run out of time. See, that's why the church is where it is. That's why we're not on the corner and the church is next to the Catholic church [St. Paul's University Chapel], which is what it should be.

Grid had a brilliant partner, a man named Frank Jones, of the Jones Office Supply Company. Jones owned the two houses on the corner, little rooming houses. Frank was a silent owner of Brown's Book Shop, a silent partner, and he wanted to protect Brown's and he wanted to keep us forever from moving over there. That was the biggest and only mistake I've ever seen Frank make. The best thing that ever happened to Brown's would be to be on the same side of the street that he's on, but he didn't understand that. When he sold those two houses to the church to make a parking lot he put in a twenty-year deed restriction that said it could not be used for anything

but church purposes, could not be used specifically – didn't say that – but said it couldn't be used for any retail bookstores.

That was reverse discrimination. We could have broken it but we decided it wasn't worth the struggle. It would have been a long court suit and we didn't have time. We would have probably won, but it didn't make any difference. The church was very happy. The church said "We're very happy to have our chapel on the corner."

So was this restriction up by the time you built?

No, no. That's where the church is, on the deed-restricted land!

Oh, so that part of the land is where the church is.

Sure. Frank was going to sue and I said "Measure it yourself. The deed restriction covers ninety by ninety by ninety."

But the church owned the other?

The church owned everything else. They owned the ninety by ninety outright too, but they couldn't build a bookstore. The church said "Churches don't get into lawsuits, Mr. Shaw. We'll build the church here and the deal is on." I said "Okay, build the church here." It worked out very, very well.

I've got to tell you a funny story. After the bomb went off when Sterling Hall blew up, everybody was pretty nervous. Probably the most nervous was J. Shaw – I was scared to death. I didn't like that. We had been set on fire a few times and lots of bomb threats and lots of problems and lots of busted windows and everything else. We were ready to sign a letter of intent with the church that this deal was finished and closed on, and the bomb went off in August, August 27.

We had a meeting in September 1970. We had this meeting in September and Frank had the lease ready to close and the letter of intent. Frank Ross, who was our attorney for many, many years, was probably more responsible for the saving of the university bookstore than any single person. Our landlord was the board of trustees of the South Wisconsin Synod of the Lutheran Church Pastors' Retirement Fund. Nine retired pastors, great old guys. They were our landlord, they owned this church and all the land. The church that is there now has no... it is not a church, it is a student fellowship. It doesn't have its own constituency. It collects little money from students, but it's supported by all the other churches in the synod and it's owned, was until very recently, owned by the South Wisconsin Lutheran Synod Pastors' Retirement Fund.

Anyway, I went to this meeting when we were going to sign the letter of intent. I listed ten reasons why we shouldn't sign the letter, all as a result of the bomb and the problems we had and all the disruption. Then I said "Now, you've heard this. I've made my statement." Frank Ross was about the color of your sweater. He was just furious. "You're killing the deal, you jerk!" Just furious with me. I said "I've said this. Now, I want us to go ahead, I want us to sign this. But I want you to know that it just destroys me if somebody comes back and says, 'Why didn't you tell me?'" That just infuriates me.

Anyway, this wonderful old man, almost in his eighties, a retired minister from Peoria, Illinois, got up and looked around and he said "Gentlemen. Martin Luther was born in 1497." Then he went through this long litany of all the tragedies and disasters of the Lutheran Church, of Christianity and everything from 1497 to 1970. And he said "Gentlemen, I've got a feeling the Lutheran Church is even going to survive this!" He said "Now, before I make the motion that we go ahead, I want to say that I came in with the same reservations that Mr. Shaw had. If he hadn't

brought them up I would have voted against this, but now I... " Somebody said "I vote this unanimous," and bang, it was unanimous. I'll never forget that. It was a wonderful meeting.

Then you began the building?

That was in 1970 and we started construction in the winter of 1970.

Well, to go back now to what was happening to the mall, to State Street.

This is all part and parcel of the same thing. With the mall, we have to back up here, quite a long time. I was on the traffic commission of the city of Madison for fourteen years. I was appointed by [Mayor] Henry Reynolds and I was appointed by three consecutive mayors. One of the big objectives of the traffic commission, of John [unclear] and several of us on, was to get the mall: to close State Street and make a mall. You can't do anything in Madison without getting into a wrestle about it, and the mall was certainly no exception.

Were many of the State Street merchants in favor of that?

I believe three out of something like ninety. Everybody was opposed to it. It was a long, long, long, hard struggle. My problem with State Street always was that State Street was too narrow. It is a pedestrian street. Madison has terrible problems, you know, exemplified or typified best by the fact that every bus route in the city, every single bus route in the city, runs on the same street or parallel streets for as much as three or four miles, all east and west. And these bus lines are going this way. The city once in the 1920s tried very hard (my father was on the committee then) to extend University Avenue from Gorham Street straight through to the Square. You'd come out about where the Lorraine Hotel is. That would have helped them enormously. But it just got lost, like the Beltline. It takes forever to get anything done. I was always very, very aggressively pro mall. That hurt the construction of the new building because many of the merchants didn't want it. The university came out then, finally, in very vigorous support of the mall, and there were some other groups that did.

Had you seen malls other places that made you think?

We went to Minneapolis, we went down to Indiana, we went to Detroit, we went all over looking at malls. To me it was the only solution.

This is tape three of the interview with John Shaw. Okay, so that was in the 1950s that you were thinking about the mall.

Yes, I was thinking about it. A lot of people were. The university planning department wanted it. The university planning department wanted to do things on University Avenue, but the city never approved the idea and it was [unclear] assembly hall down here on Washington Avenue. Same precedent – the city, county opposing the university. The university often is very progressive in its ideas about land and land use and street use and about the mall concept I supported. I did not support the concept that the university wanted for University Avenue. I knew that from [unclear], the showpiece.

The mall concept, to me, was it. There was no way the street could be widened and the sixty-seven parking spaces are just simply not that important. The State Street Chowder Marching Society and our State Street merchants, I tell you, they're amazing. They only can see what's in front of their store. They can't look down the street.

I remember they had to have off-street parking that you could drive in.

Sure, sure. You talk about who didn't like us. Stan Hershlieder left; he sold out and left. Wait until you talk to Herb Eberhardt. I don't know if you're going to talk to Herb. But it did change. What I didn't understand then, twenty years ago, I just thought these guys were [unclear], for example, Mack [unclear], good stores. I couldn't believe that they couldn't get along in this mall. But they all fought the mall so hard that they hurt themselves.

I really believe that, to this day, to the extent that, frankly, the good stores left State Street, and they blamed it on to the mall. I don't agree with that at all. I believe they should have blamed their own merchandising techniques and their own concepts about how to merchandise on a mall. Now, it was extraordinarily successful in Minneapolis. It is now in the Milwaukee mall, enclosed malls, but the same concept.

Are you talking mostly about the area down where the bookstore was, of getting that street closed off? It took the university to finally just do that.

The city had to agree. The university has no right to close the street. It cannot close a street. That's something they can't do.

But they put a lot of pressure on.

They can put a lot of heat on, and they did. The interesting thing is that the engineers, the planners, the professionals of the city, if I could describe them that way, all wanted the mall. It was the alderpersons and the political types who were opposed to the mall. The technicians all were for the mall. It solved all kinds of problems for them: bus routes and the whole bit. But politically it was a disaster.

I'd like to get in to when the civil disruptions began with the students, how things changed in the 1960s at the time of the Vietnam War and what was happening with the students and, therefore, to the merchants.

I've already told you, and I'll say it one more time, I don't want to get into this very much. I'll touch on it, but it's a period in my life that I am amazed to realize that I'm still mad about it, still very angry about it. I have never been able to accept in my mind the fact that so many faculty caved in to the demands of what I'm going to describe as, for lack of a better word, the urban radical student.

You think this was primarily led by the New Yorkers and the New Jersey people?

Not necessarily. No. The most radical kid I ever knew in my entire time, the most difficult, the most miserable kid I knew came from that terrible eastern town of Appleton, Wisconsin. So that doesn't prove anything. I'm thinking the urban student – I'm talking about New York, Cleveland, St. Louis, Chicago – the urban student as opposed to the kid from Ellsworth, Wisconsin, or the rural communities. The urban student group were the leaders in this thing. Of course, the students didn't bother me. Boy, don't ever quote me on that to Barbara, because they did bother me. The thing that made me the most angry was the administrators and faculty who caved in to this and wouldn't stand up and be counted.

Now, I remember particularly my first experience with the GE [General Electric] reps on Bascom Hill. That was my first experience. I want to check this so I have the right date – October 18 through 21 of 1967.

You probably noticed some changes in the students before that, though.

Oh, absolutely, yes!

During the 1950s the students, as I recall, were pretty proper and pretty conservative.

They were getting along all right and, as long as the GI group was the sort of leading group of student thinking, things were pretty cool, calm, and collected, and businesslike if you want to put it that way. Two or three things changed that I remember so clearly. I remember Jack Kennedy's assassination had a very.. I remember that very clearly. I remember considering closing the store because my staff, my young people, were so upset about that. I had a little staff meeting and I said "Look, we don't even know if he's dead. What are we doing here? Everybody quiet down."

This was November 22nd, as I recall. What was the year?

Kennedy was killed in November 1963, November 22.

Yes. He was elected in 1960. And, of course, there was a big push for civil rights at that time, a restlessness.

I can remember the sit-ins in Greensborough [North Carolina]. A lot of kids were up pretty tight about this. The other thing I remember is the James Meredith thing. There were meetings and lots of stuff going on.

And when was Birmingham?

James Meredith was at Ole Miss. Another thing that was very interesting – I looked at some old notes to get these notes – I remember the DDT hearings here in Madison, which I'm sure you remember. I remember when Rachel Carson's book [*The Silent Spring*] came out and what an effect that had on young people. They were looking around and saying industry, you know, these manufacturers don't care about what's happening to us. They put out DDT and they don't give a damn. I remember Rachel Carson's book.

All through my book-selling career and my trade book department time – which was my hobby – I loved to see and watch what were the in-books at a given moment among students. They're great book buyers. This is a great book-buying town. These kids really buy books, and lots of them. And they love them. I remember Rachel Carson was one of the first books that ever really took off. Everybody was reading it.

The Silent Spring?

Yes, *The Silent Spring*. It was quite amazing to me.

You had a big demand?

Then the other thing that made an impression on students that I sensed... remember during this time I was an advisor for my fraternity. I was so-called faculty advisor for the Sigma fraternity so I had lots of contact with young people. And because I was manager of the book store I probably was invited fifteen or twenty times a year to speak to student groups about "that crummy book store that is stealing all of our money." I did a lot of it and I enjoyed it. It was kind of fun. I also was an officer in the National Association of College Stores during this long period, so I knew what was going on all over the United States, and how it was very different. The University of Virginia never had any of this. The University of California, that's where it started, you know. It seemed to me, talking to my colleagues all through the book business, all over the United States, that we seemed to be the hotbed. Things happened faster here and earlier here than they did in any other part of the country. So the "I have a dream," when Martin Luther King's speech...

Tremendous sympathy for the civil rights movement.

When those three boys were killed in Mississippi. None of these had the impact of the GE thing. As I say, my first experience with a real riot was in 1967. I will never forget that.

Now that was General Electric?

That was General Electric and quite a harmless kind of a thing.

The reason for it was that GE was?

They were making something that the students didn't approve of.

I was thinking it was one of the chemical firms.

Well, Dow was another one. But that was in the engineering school. That was another riot. I've got them all down. The Dow one was the one that got the big noise, but it was the GE riots that started this.

That's the one that was up at Commerce?

Up at the Commerce Building.

I know Bob said that he happened to drive across campus and saw it.

I was there. I had been up to see Earl Kubly and I was caught in it, literally. I was furious about several things, but among other things, one of my associate directors of the Y... I was president of the YMCA board and there was one of my knucklehead employees down there, right in the middle, throwing rocks at the cops. I never forgave him for that. It was a vicious thing. Lots of kids got hurt. It got out of hand.

It snowballed. With the police throwing tear gas.

The police department got out of hand, the kids got out of hand. Everybody. That's what a riot is: everyone loses control.

And this was the beginning of the real difficulties on campus?

Let me tell you, I starred some dates – 1964, June 1964, when the three kids were killed in Mississippi and LBJ [President Lyndon Baines Johnson] was elected very shortly thereafter, and then the Tonkin resolution. All these things. These were the things that were beginning to galvanize these kids and these kids that were getting uptight about this.

Back to my urban student type... lots of kids didn't pay any attention to this. Lots of kids. But I remember of the boys in my own fraternity which ones were excited about this and took part. Then the Tonkin resolution. And I remember the Warren Commission report – we had thousands of copies of this and it just went out. It was unbelievable. All the students. They were deeply concerned about this. They felt very strongly about it and they wanted to know what was going on. These were things that I remember.

And they were unhappy, those that had to go to the war.

Remember that by 1966 there were 385,000 troops in Vietnam. I don't know of anybody that approved of the Vietnam War. I can't think of anybody that thought it was a good idea.

And a great many of the students in my boy's contemporaries were in school under pressure: if they didn't stay in school they would be drafted. And yet school was very upsetting.

Horrible. It was a horrible period, a horrible period for everybody. And there was a great period of great uneasiness. During this time we had all kinds of, I don't want to say trouble with, that

isn't quite the right way, all up and down the street... for example, on State Street, all around this community, we were having all kinds of difficulty with student unions. I'm kind of a pro-union type myself, basically. I'm a dues-paying, retired, honorably discharged member of the American Steelworkers Union, AFL-CIO steelworkers. I was a steward in the steelworkers union. I understand what a union does, which young people didn't understand.

I'm talking about in my own store and in hundreds of other places that I know about in this period. Students looked at unions, labor unions, as a democratic device to give them the management of the business, to take over the management of the business. The people who really found it out first were the restaurant operators. They didn't care whether the kids belonged to the union or whether they didn't, so they didn't do anything about the union. If they tried to get organized, fine, organize, go ahead. Then the kids would come in and say "Now, we're going to do this and we're going to do this," and they said "we can't do that." This is when we get into all these difficulties and all the strikes and all the monkey business that we all went through. This was a period when all this was developing.

Remember, during this period I probably had fifty students employed in the store, I had three student board members, I was very active in my fraternity until they got kicked off the campus at this time. We were one of the students who said you couldn't belong to one of the fraternities if it wasn't all pure white, you know. I knew all kinds of kids. My wife and I enjoyed working with them, up to and about this time. But then, to me, they got out of hand.

It was partly the labor union thing. The unions during this period weren't doing well. I'm talking about national unions. So the retail clerks unions and others – the meat cutters unions – they all jumped in on this and looked at it as an opportunity to get new union members. It was very, very complicated. The kids were getting all excited about this. Plus the fact that they simply got to the point that they didn't trust government. Obviously, they didn't. They felt terribly put upon, especially the men, because it was a very disagreeable situation: go to school or get drafted. Gone to Korea. The whole Korean episode. All this gray area. They didn't trust anybody or any thing.

They lost a respect for authority, too. When they became enemies of the police, then their authority figures were gone. Was this the beginning of the time when they began to dress so sloppily and just in sort of rebellion?

To me the key date was October 18, 1967. That's when it started. I think everything really started to go to pot in that time. The thing I did wrong during this period, as I remember it, was that we had bought the Taylor Building, which is the building just west of our old store, and the windows had been broken so many times I just said "This is crazy."

And why were they broken?

No reason at all. We were a bookstore, we were a highly visible thing. The windows were big and I was tempted to throw a rock at them myself. They went from the ceiling to the ground.

But for years and years nobody had broken any.

We might lose a window every two or three years. I lost every window... I lost every piece of glass in that store twice in about two weeks. Every piece of glass! Every single one.

You had it replaced?

Finally I said the hell with it.

This was just trashing, they called it.

That's what they called it: "We're going to get the store." Anyway, I bricked it up. Boy, that started something. I didn't think much about it at the time. "This is foolish for me to spend..." I think it cost $3,500 to replace that window. Or $4,000. Something like that. I said "This is crazy! I'll just brick it up." What I said at the time was that I had to have the wall space and then I had to be very careful to make sure we put shelves in. We did need the wall space. It was a perfectly square building and we did use the whole wall.

But did that cause some problem?

Oh, yes. The faculty was... I thought "Oh, boy, be careful, John." Not the faculty. It was some members of the faculty that said "What are you building here, a fort?" This kind of stuff.

But you did get spray painted, I suppose.

Oh, yes. We learned how to handle that. We bought our own sandblasting machine. We trained our own employees to use them. We had our own spray paint. The minute it got painted, "sphis," we were out.

This wasn't just your store, but all of them?

Madison Gas, the telephone company, Kroger's, and the University Book Store got probably 75% of all the problems that were there.

I remember Rennebohm's right across the street from you having some.

Rennebohm's. Forgive me, John Sondhogger, but they were stupid the way they handled it. They would run around chasing people because they were spray painting. I'd say "John, get a sandblaster and blast it off and forget it. The next time they do it, wipe it off."

Weren't there some nights, some evenings, when they had marches when an awful lot of windows were trashed up and down State Street?

Sure, sure. I've seen as many as 5,000 people marching on State Street, throwing rocks in every direction.

What would set them off, that many people? This wasn't Halloween.

Some of the newspapers... there was a man named Murpha who came into my store, asked for an appointment, got it, sat down. He said "I'm telling you that you are to do thus and so and thus and so or your store is going to be burned out." I said "Okay, fine. We're not going to do thus and so. If the store is burned out I will hold you personally responsible, and as far as I'm concerned, you [unclear]." So I called the fire department and the city police and we had a long meeting about it. They knew who he was and they said "You'll be interested to know he's done the same thing at Kroger's and one other place." Three nights later, Kroger's was burned to the ground.

That was the one up by the Square?

No, no. On University Avenue, the 600 block of University Avenue. And the A&P left there. They had so much damage and so much theft that they just said "We're not going to put up with this nonsense. We're going to get the hell out of here and forget it."

So Kroger's was burned down?

They were burned to the ground. The police said it was done beautifully.

I remember that. Did they catch this guy for it?

They caught him, but they couldn't prove a thing. Our theft during this period and our in-store damage was just catastrophic. It went on and on and on. And awful things happened, you know. The messes they created were just unbelievable – human feces tucked in between the books and so on.

The theft was increased considerably? I suppose you always had shoplifting.

We always had a little shoplifting. That was never a problem. It's always been there. As long as there have been stores there's been shoplifting. That goes back to the [unclear] or beyond, I'm sure. This was not new. But during this period we're talking about, the 1960s and 1970s, it was astronomical. We were forced to hire full time... a major chunk of our salary budget was for security. We were forced... during this period we had 24-hour security; we had people in our building 24 hours a day. We were set on fire five or six times but they always controlled it. Inside the store.

The city police had a work station in my office, the fire department had phones and stuff in my office. We were close and we were central and if there was any disturbance it started either on the mall or in front of our store at State and Lake. This is a period that the city, the general population, knew nothing about. The decision to call the [Wisconsin National] Guard was made in my office.

On what occasion?

I'm going to get this one right, too. The Guard was called by the governor, during a riot... it was right after Kent State, but now I can't find it. The Guard was called in February 1969. That was the TA [Teaching Assistants] strike that started it, that was the catalyst.

Yes, the teaching assistants were pretty big for that.

Too big for their britches. The Guard was called on the morning of...

We were gone that year, but we heard that it was a very bad spring.

Oh, it was terrible. It was terrible! The Red Gym was burned in January of the same year. The Chicago Seven riots were... we didn't have much trouble but we had a lot of in-store damage. There was another GE strike in February of 1970. Every piece of glass in our store was smashed. Every piece! I couldn't find a door, I couldn't find anything. That included all behind the cashiers. That's the only time I've ever hit a man in anger. I hit a kid so hard it's a wonder I didn't break my arm. He was throwing rocks at my cashiers, you know. These are nice women.

This was during the day?

Sure! Right in the middle of the day!

Did they break the glass in the day time?

Sure! Sure! Thousands of kids out roaming the streets and they just smashed everything they could throw a rock at. On that GE strike on February 10, 1970, there were people in the streets. The streets were blocked. There was nobody in cars, no buses, no anything. The streets were full of kids. All of a sudden, just as though somebody had said "now," in a matter of seconds every piece of glass in that store was broken. We had sixty-four feet on State Street and one hundred and twenty feet on Lake Street and every window was smashed, above and below. Every single one. Didn't miss one. And all in seconds.

Did they use rocks?

Sure. And bricks. There they were standing. They had them hidden, they had them in their damned knapsacks. I've hated knapsacks to this day. Somebody gave the signal, said "Do it," and they smashed every piece of glass. Then they came into the store. They came in and tried to steal. There were some glass partitions along the cashiers and this kid was breaking them. I've never hit anybody so hard in my life. To this day I don't know who it was but that kid hurt for a long time.

Did you have enough security people to watch over the place?

We never had quite enough. My chief of security was August Pieper, who's now a captain in the city police department. He was tough. He had a crew: mostly city policemen and city firemen. Of course, the thing that really distressed me about my security was this hatred between my security people and students. My security people hated them. They'd go after a kid, just like... it was terrible. It was just terrible.

Back to my thesis again, the faculty that sympathized with this, the faculty who graded on pass-fail – those people were rather sympathetic to what was going on in my judgment. They never understood my vigorous position. For example, if you were caught stealing and were taken to court we absolutely never would withdraw. It was a company policy. I almost got fired over it.

Among other things I, the security people, that is, arrested a departmental chairman, they arrested the wife of a very prominent faculty member, both of whom were convicted and sentenced in court. I got in big trouble over that. They said "You've got to back off on this." I said "I'm not going to back off, by God. I'm not going to have people come in here and walk off with my store. And particularly somebody sympathizing, a faculty wife sympathizing with these kids. I won't back off."

I remember talking to Ed Young. I said "I was at one of the Dow riots on campus and I heard Kurt Wendt, leading the college of engineering. He said to one of his instructors – and I don't know yet to this day who it was – he said 'If you have one of these speeches in your class about the war I'm going to give you my word, you'll never teach on this school again as long as you live!'" The Ag School...

They were a little farther removed from it.

Oh, they had riots out there, too. They had some pretty good ones. But the dean there said "This is it." So many people stood up. Young stood up. He wasn't going to put up with any nonsense.

I remember Bob saying that there weren't excused absences given because they were out rioting.

No, no. He was a tough little [unclear]. He was not going to stand for any of this.

A lot of students lost out and couldn't concentrate.

Then it started to calm down. The [unclear] was a terrible day for us.

Do you have the date of that?

May 4 or possibly May 5 of 1970.

But the year before that, in the spring when we were gone, I remember the Lloyds telling us about going to some affair at the Wisconsin Center and coming out and there was tear gas in the air around there.

Tear gas! My God, we had tear gas every day!

There were just groups of students roaming around, about to cause trouble all the time, and that was the only way of controlling it. So then the bomb you were talking about, that was in autumn?

August 27.

But things did slow down.

Much worse after for a very short time. Much worse. For example, the bomb was on the 27th. In 1971, just a year later, we started to tear down the little church, the little chapel, and it was all busted up again for destroying the church. And then, of course, come May 6, I started to barricade the store. I remember we had to get uniformed police to get into the store.

This was in the 1970s. Those were my toughest days. Fred Harvey Harrington resigned on the eighth and that was a big fuss. Then they firebombed the Commerce Building. That was another. The Guard was around during all this period. The Guard was sent home on the 21st of that month. We ended the year. They had pass-fail exams – all you had to do was show up and you got a passing grade. Then on the 27th our Armstrong friends… another thing that annoyed me about the university and its people was that nobody ever admitted what a terrible thing that was until six or seven years later. Nobody told them they had gutted the whole building and spoiled half of the chemistry building besides killing the guy. That was hush-hush.

Oh, I don't know. I thought that the whole city was really incensed about that.

Yes, they were.

In fact, across the country I thought it had somewhat of a cooling-off effect.

Yes. It did. It had a wonderful effect on the country, but it didn't have much around here. In 1971, during May, the first nice days of the month, there were all kinds of riots down there, all kinds of tear gas. They really [unclear] the store that time.

In 1971?

Sure.

But then they were really trying to put the pressure on the president about then.

That's right. And, remember May 6, 1971, was when they took the flag down on top of Bascom. Do you remember that? There was a real full-blown riot then. There was two dozen sitting up on top of Bascom Hall. They hauled the flag down and started it on fire. Then finally by 1972... the mall opened in 1972, in March, and there was another riot that day. It didn't start out to be a riot, but there were so many people on the street that it got out of hand. I'll never forget that.

There were always a few students that would start leading this and haranguing and all.

I've said and Ed Millins said and many people said that if somebody could give me permission to take one hundred kids off this campus we could have stopped the whole thing. And one of them was our distinguished ex-mayor Mr. [Paul] Soglin. Yes, he was one of the leaders. The worst one I know is a kid from Appleton, and the second worst one is now a doctor, a very respectable doctor here. He got more people stirred up faster than anybody I knew.

Of course, the legislature had a hand in this by suddenly raising the tuition.

Oh, sure! The legislature did everything backwards, I thought. I thought everybody handled it poorly. But I think it was much worse, I think there was much pressure [unclear] than most people realized. Only had a clue to what was going on.

What it did – now let's get back to State Street for a second – it simply ruined State Street commercially. The businesses there just said "We're not going to put up with this. We're just going to move out." So today instead of having some relatively stable, relatively good businesses, they've got restaurants and little – I don't mean to say this in a disparaging way, but I guess I am – Mom and Pop shops, boutiques. Of course, that's the whole concept of retailing that's new. The old, the traditional retailer on State Street and the Square, even Hilldale, they're going out of style. People, service, personnel – all this is all gone now.

But students for several years, when they were in all those hippie outfits, they weren't really buying new clothes.

Well, that's true. That's very true.

They certainly weren't buying furs.

But they were buying blue jeans, this kind of thing. Marie, during that period, my lease arrangement with the Endres Company in the old store was I couldn't sell tee-shirts or sweat shirts. The Wisconsin Badger stuff was all sold by Endres. The best years we ever had in our lives, including business on the rag business, which is tee-shirts and sweatshirts, was during the period of those awful ragged days. They just bought them by the ton. They had plenty of money, they had lots of money. That was just the style. Students, bless their little hearts, were the biggest bunch of [unclear] I've ever seen. Something takes off, they all do it.

And it was just informal dress.

I love it. I'm glad that I can go downtown in a pair of chinos and look fairly respectable and nobody thinks anything about it. I think it was the greatest thing that ever happened to American style, blue jeans. Barbara and I were on the campus just the other day and she said "Look at the blue jeans. Still." Thousands and thousands of them.

But they're not ragged like they were, with those patches on. They were really a disgrace for a while.

Those kids deliberately did it. They buy them, they dyed them, tie-dyed them, cut them and put patches on them.

And they wore them forever. I remember it was supposed to be a great sight for small-town people to come to Madison and walk up and down State Street to see these awful clothes that people wore.

But it had a terrible effect on us. Now, business was good during all this period, although I was scared to death. In 1972 I thought we had bitten off more than we could chew.

Was this when you were moving?

No, the year after we moved. It didn't penetrate... I expected to lose money and lots of money the first year that we were moving and it was very complicated. But the second year I expected to come very close to a break-even point. We didn't even come within a mile of it.

Of course, you had a lot more space.

We had trouble with it. We didn't know how to handle all the space we had. Theft during that first year was just unbelievable. Really out of control. But the street itself... I'm so sorry that people like Bill Purnell, good friends, friends all my life almost, he left.

I know. I read that the merchants said that their customers just didn't want to come down there.

The first problem.

They were worried about it.

Marie, that's why we opened the store [University Book Store] in Hilldale. During this period we lost all of our mature women customers. They were gone. They will not come down. You can't park, you're pushed around by these kids. No kid on earth... well there are a few, there are some nice kids. There are good kids, very rare, I know that. But if you would go walking down State Street as a middle-aged woman you're just as apt to get pushed into a wall as not. They don't pay any attention. So the women stopped trading with us. We've got them almost all back.

But Antoine's.

Mary left. She said "I'm not going to stand it, I can't stand it any more. I just won't put up with it."

They just had lost customers and they were afraid, I suppose, of all of it.

I know. Mary was very bitter about it because she had a very fine business there. But all up and down the street: Fritzie Raggatz is still raging about it, how terrible it was. He's going to pull out soon.

That's the shoe store?

No, that's Oriental Specialties. He's no relation to the shoe Raggatz family.

But some of those businesses are now over in University Square or whatever that's called over there.

Nothing from State Street. All those businesses are gone.

McNeill & Purnell are now just off State Street.

On Gorham and State, in what I think is a terrible mistake. Bobbie said just the other day "We were doing very well." John Yost, of course, is in that, too. Now, Manchester's shop on Frances and State is doing well. [Unclear] is across the street. He just went down the tube so fast I couldn't believe it. But he wouldn't change his merchandising, didn't change his strategy at all. He just kept selling the same stuff for twenty years.

Those were out for a while. I think a lot of those things are back in, buying shirts and ties again.

Not too much.

But no students.

Suits are still out, until you get to be about thirty or thirty-five. Now that would be one of the black dark thin-striped suits, and you're a freak. But the state of business, I agree... when I see Manchester's gone, all these good businesses. And they're being replaced by these cut-rate, awful stores. I just hate stores like that.

How did you feel about all those vendors out in the mall there?

They never did bother me. I insisted and still do... they're finally doing what the plan originally called for: they're being licensed and they're paying a little bit of the cost. I object to the fact that they don't clean up their mess. For example, the townspeople don't know this but the University

Book Store pays for snow removal, for all the clean-up, all that stuff. And the churches do. Everybody has to pay. But these knuckleheads that sit out there with their dirty little shacks, they don't pay anything. They pay five dollars a month or something like that. Our snow removal bill is going to be... well, it's up in the thousands. For just street maintenance. On the mall itself.

You must share that with the library.

The library has to pay, the historical society has to pay. We all fought it. Some of them at the university even went to court over this and lost. We're still paying an assessment.

How do you like that bandstand and the noise? Your building is secure enough so that that doesn't bother you any more?

I don't care. The function of the mall is... to my way of thinking it got too raucous. But remember, Marie, the university is a city all in and of itself. Fifty thousand people go to school or work, one way or another, for the University of Wisconsin, Madison, and Extension. Fifty thousand people! That's a whole city in itself. And they're all compressed into this little bitty space. Sure, they're going to be noisy and sure, they're going to be raucous. I feel sorry for my friends next door at St. Paul's [University Chapel] when they're trying to run a wedding or a funeral or something and they've got a rock band out there going just as hard as they can.

But you've got to expect the students to have fun. And they did, through all the years. When I talk with the old-timers, they just cut up quite a bit.

The bag rush, and St. Patrick's Day parade, where they ripped up State Street time and time and time again. But it was only one day; it wasn't quite as bad. Kids have to let off a little steam. I have no objection to that. I like the bandstand. It isn't what I expected.

I was taking a class last year and it's interesting to come out of the class at noon and have somebody haranguing.

There have been religious freaks, they're tiresome. The bums are tiresome. The drunks are tiresome.

But people are finding out what's going on. That's our free society, I guess.

Yes, but some of it... that black man that was preaching there, the artist, well, he's crazy. He absolutely should be in an institution. But this is the way we are. State Street has never been the same. It's never going to come back to what it was.

But that concourse is really pretty nice, I think.

I think it's lovely.

The mile, a measured mile, between Bascom and the Capitol.

And the Square is nice. But somebody has to figure out a way to get, of course, the [unclear] insurance, banking, computers. Oscar Mayer's is going to be gone in a couple three or four years. And without Oscar Mayer this town never would have had a Capitol Centre, we wouldn't have had an Art Center, we wouldn't have had anything without Oscar Mayer.

Do you think the Foundation will go, too?

What do you mean, the Foundation?

The one that gives the money.

Oh, they're already gone. Oscar Mayer as a Madison institution, all gone. Now as long as Oscar and [unclear], there will always be something, but not like the things they picked up over the years. It's unbelievable. Eugenie Mayer Bolz is in her high eighties now. She's a tremendous giver. They're gone. Oscar lives, for all practical purposes, in Palm Springs [California]. So, the whole nature of this city is changing. How they're going to solve the problem of the Square with the kind of aldermanic system that we have, where perhaps a third of the aldermen are students or student types – this town is going to be hard to get going.

During all the riots and the unrest, did the State Street merchants get together and discuss what they could do? They didn't?

Just fought with each other. We tried. We had an organization, but we would have times we would have a meeting where the 400 block would be arguing with the 300 block and the 700 block would be yelling at the 600 block. We just never... we tried desperately. Oh, I remember we once rented a theater space somewhere and tried to get them all together.

You'd think you might have been able to do something if you had all gotten together. I don't know what.

I have no idea what we could have done. And we couldn't get together because we all had different approaches. Of course, I couldn't say anything because "[unclear] that guy." If I heard that one more time I could have killed somebody. "Captive market. What the hell, you couldn't get rich no matter what you do." Whereas, in fact, the book business is one of the toughest businesses in the world.

I'll never forget Charlie Wagner. He got incensed because we had the cap and gown business and he wanted to get a piece of the cap and gown business. He said "Well, captive market." We went to the regents. I said "Okay, let's stop fussing around. Let's give up caps and gowns, as far as I'm concerned." So I called the E. R. Moen Company and told them that we were going to bow out on our contract and that it's going to be taken over by a good, solid businessman, Charles Wagner. They sent a representative out. The first thing they asked him for was a ten thousand dollar deposit, cash on the barrel. He said "What are you talking about? You're crazy. The gowns are worth fifteen or twenty dollars apiece and if I send up two thousand of them, and the hoods!" So he got out of the notion of that in an awful big hurry.

He decided not to do that?

He said "I couldn't. I can't pay that."

Did you ever have much trouble with their disappearing, the caps and gowns?

Well, we'd lose a percentage, but…

I thought they couldn't get their diplomas or something.

That was the lie we spread around, but absolutely not true. A few were stolen. As a matter of fact, the last year I was there I got a cap and gown and a hood back from a man who said "I've been ashamed about this for twenty years."

There isn't too much else you could use it for.

I don't think there's anything more useless than a cap and gown and hood.

I know some faculty members did buy their own because they marched a lot.

A few did, because they had a lot of students. Really, you should support your own students, so some of them did.

Well, I know you were pretty tired of the business. Do you think this was due to the complications of that period of unrest?

I don't think there's any question about it. In the first place, I turned into a workaholic. All I did was work. I didn't do anything at home. My kids couldn't understand what was going on. Barbara was very sympathetic, but... I finally said "This is crazy. I'm not going to work like this." For years, for years and years and years I worked every day.

Saturdays?

Oh, Saturdays, hell! I didn't mind Saturdays. I worked Sundays, all the time. I worked every day. You can't ever get away from it. I had some wonderful people working for me. But when it gets right down to who's going to be responsible, who's going to give you a final yes or no, it always came back to me.

I had some wonderful bosses. I had Herb Williams, I had John Guy Fawlkes, I had [unclear], I had Harold Goodwin on my board of directors. But, you know, they never got paid one red cent. I shouldn't say they didn't care, because they did care. Harold Kublitsch is still worrying about the store and he's been off the board for twenty years. But it wasn't life and death; they didn't have anything to gain out of it. I was pretty much on my own. And had it not been for my accountants and my attorneys I would have left years ago. When it really got down to push coming to shove the answer was "Well, John, do whatever you think best." Then the thing that would burn me: why did you do that? "Wait a minute. Where were you when we were making this decision?" So I got a lot of flack, I got way too much flack from the faculty. I was at Stan Taylor's for this New Year's thing. Two faculty members there jumped me about something and I've been gone for seven years!

They're still blaming John Shaw.

It was still my fault. Much of it I enjoyed and had a good life in the book business and enjoyed it. I'm glad I was in it. I would never do it again. I would go into private business or institutional business.

But that's because you know what can happen. Things can happen in those, too. But it was a period of terrible stress.

What's interesting, my contemporaries who were in California, they all left early. Wherever there was real destruction on campus, the people left. They said "I don't want to be the center of all this flack."

At least Madison didn't get into the drug scene like they did out in San Francisco.

No, not as much, although there's plenty of it around here.

I think there is now, but nothing...

Oh, my no. Nothing like San Francisco, nothing like the southern California cities. And New York University, the New York State system, it's just terrible. Of course, you know, there's three thousand college bookstores in the United States today and there's only ten that operate, or nine now, that operate like the University Book Store – independent but not independent, and not operated by the institution that they serve. There's a board of directors, a governing board of

some kind. It's interesting that we were the strongest stores in the country. University of Washington, University of Wisconsin, Harvard, Princeton, Yale, Texas.

I'm sure the university is, or some people there are, certainly grateful.

The administration has always liked this arrangement because they had a hands-on but a hands-off at the same time.

And much of this was due to your being able to bridge the gap between the town and gown.

That I did pretty well. Fairly well. But I wouldn't do it again.

No. You can't start over and it's a good thing. I'm sure you were glad to be out of it now. But you did stay on the board.

No, when I left, I left. I had a contract, which I honored. The contract said if we call you, you have to respond, but I never went down and said this is what I think. The contract expired three years ago, but we're probably in more communication today than they were when the contract was on. The contract was pretty minimal. It paid for my insurance, is about what it paid for, my health and accident insurance, which is the thing I was worried about, until I got to be sixty-five.

You retired at?

Sixty-one. I guess I was sixty-two, I guess I was. But I wanted out. I told them at sixty-one, I said "This is it. I'm all through. Select my successor and I don't want any part of it. I don't want anything to do with it." They wouldn't do it, so I hired him myself. I said "You're the boss. Go, man." I tried to help him, although he had been in the store for fourteen years. But I found that if I went down I was still the old man and that undercut him, so I said, this is crazy. I talked to him four times since he got back from the annual meeting, board meeting. He got back Saturday and we've talked four times on company business. We have a very wonderful working relationship.

I'm sure your expertise is very valuable. But if they start having riots again I imagine you'll stay away completely.

I will move out of town. Never go back.