

LLOYD FISHER
ORAL HISTORY INTERVIEW
JULY 2, 2009

Q. Good morning, this is Kevlin Haire of the University Archives. It's July 2, 2009 and I'm here interviewing Lloyd Fisher, who hopefully will give a wonderful account on his life in the stadium dorms and his relationship with The Ohio State University. Thank you for being here, first of all. To start us off, I usually have our interviewees tell us a little bit about their personal background such as where you were born and your family and that kind of thing, just to lead us up to how you got to Ohio State.

A. I was born October 23, 1923, in the little town of Medina, which is in northern Ohio. It's curious that a small town in Ohio would be named after the second most sacred city of Islam, and I've gone through the county histories, and I have never really found out why that name was given to that small town. There's one story that initially it was named Mecca, but then it's called Medina, although as I understand it, the Mideast city is pronounced Medeena. But anyway, as was not uncommon in those days, I was born in my grandmother's front bedroom. She was a part-time midwife and helped in my delivery. I grew up in the middle of the Depression, dirt poor, although as most people in my generation say, I grew up poor but I didn't realize it because everybody around us was in the same boat. Nobody seemed to have any more [than I did]. And growing up in that small town was pretty typical, although Medina had a more diverse population than many small towns of that area. We had a small African-American community. We had Jewish and Catholic families. We all went to the same public school, and

so at least for that time and for that area, I probably was exposed to a more diverse group of classmates than many other individuals growing up in small towns at that time. We didn't have any money. I had a good scholastic record. I was not an athlete. I was a cheerleader and a drum major. I didn't think I would be able to go to college. I had a friend who was two years older than I, and he told me, because he was living in the stadium scholarship dormitories that if I could be a resident there, I could work part-time, which everybody did, and I could go to college. And so I began to investigate it and discovered the stadium scholarship dormitories. Those dormitories were the brainchild of the Dean of Men in the middle of the Depression, Dean Joe Parks. And he formed a committee because he was concerned about the number of students that were capable and still not able to go to college. And so one of the ideas that that committee came up with was a cooperative dormitory where the residents did most of the work and therefore, the dollar amount that they paid would be less. And so out of that came the three stadium dormitories. The first one was the Tower Club, which was built in the southwest tower of the stadium. Even before that was finished, they began the experiment in the men's gymnasium and with the help of one of the, I guess you would call it a stimulus organization at this particular time in 2009, the Works Progress Administration. It was one of President Roosevelt's governmental entities that helped in many areas of public works. And it helped to build the very spartan accommodations that became the stadium scholarship dormitories: Tower, Buckeye and Stadium Club. You had to have good grades, good scholarship to get into that club. You also had to prove

that you needed financial help. And in many cases, they considered other activities, sports, publications, student government, and all those kinds of things. So I came to Ohio State in the fall of 1941. My recollection is, and I think it's pretty accurate, my whole first year at Ohio State, 1941, by living in the stadium dormitories, cost about \$350: room, board, tuition, fees, and everything. I had a part-time job mopping floors at the old Ohio Union for twenty-five cents an hour. The stadium dormitories were bare, spartan accommodations. All three of them were set up in a very similar layout. There were three floors. On each floor there was an entry hall or recreation area, and on either side of that were sleeping rooms, which slept about 20 men in double-decker cots, bunk beds. And we had steel lockers. And at the back of the sleeping room was a common shower room and toilet area. It was great basic training for the Army basic training that came later on for almost all of the residents in 1941. It was a truly cooperative operation. There were only two paid employees in the club: the cook and the assistant cook. We did all the rest of the work. We washed the pots and pans. We washed all the dishes and so forth. We served the food. We cleaned all of the rooms and all of the areas regularly, every Saturday. We washed windows and cleaned the rooms.

Q. Did you have a schedule, people were assigned to certain duties?

A. Right. The governmental set-up in the Club was that you had an executive committee, and they elected a steward who was like a business manager of the Club. And he ordered supplies and set the schedule for KP and other general activities. There was always someone at each floor to answer phones and, if there

were any guests or strangers that came in, to greet them. In addition to the steward, there were proctors on each of the sleeping floors who set the cleaning schedule and assigned people to that, acted as sort of counselors for the residents of that particular floor or that room. You had one north, one south, two north, two south, and so on. The steward was not paid, but he got free room and board. The proctors for the individual rooms did not get paid; it was a quasi-honorary position. Nobody thought it was very honorary. So, in 1941, my recollection is that room and board was about \$5 per week for the three quarters we were there. The Clubs were not typically occupied in the summer time, except maybe for athletic camps or something like that. I was studying for my first set of college finals when the news of Pearl Harbor came. Ohio State was a land-grant university, which meant that in those days every male student was required to take reserve officers training for the first two years you were at the University. Until Pearl Harbor, nobody took ROTC very seriously. In fact, one of the things that you learned as a freshman was that if you could befriend someone who worked in a dry cleaning store, you could get a pad of tickets so that you could show the ROTC instructor that your uniform was in the dry cleaners and you wouldn't have to wear it. So you only wore the uniform when it was rainy. Most of us were in field artillery ROTC. There was also a signal corps unit and an engineering unit, people who were in electrical engineering were in signal corps ROTC, and engineers were in engineering. But most of the rest of us were in field artillery. I don't know how that decision was made. And we received training in 1941 on old French artillery pieces that were relics of World War I. After Pearl Harbor,

they apparently needed the barrels of those field artillery pieces. I assume they melted them down and made new ones. But anyway, so when we returned in the fall of 1942, all of the field artillery pieces had pieces of telephone poles stuck on them. And so there we were doing what we called cannoner's hop, which was simply a routine drill around the artillery pieces. But here was this wooden telephone pole stuck on them. So it was a little bit absurd. But there were a lot of things going on at that time. I lived in the stadium dorms until I was drafted, and in the spring of 1943 I went into the Army, spent three years in the Army, and then returned to Ohio State in the fall of 1946. At that time, because I had the financial help of the GI Bill, I did not go back into the stadium dormitories. And I'm not even sure at that point how functional they were. They had been used by various military units during the war. So, I lived there only for the school year 1941-42 and the fall quarter of 1942 and part of the winter quarter beginning in January 1943.

Q. And then you went into the Army, correct?

A. Yes.

Q. Okay. Now, were you stationed overseas?

A. I took basic training in what was known as Camp Swift, Texas, which was not far from Austin, because I had had field artillery ROTC, the Army amazingly enough put me in the field artillery. And we did maneuvers in Louisiana. We did maneuvers in Missouri. I was sent to surveying school in Fort Sill, Oklahoma. Then, we did amphibious training in California, preparatory to being sent out to the South Pacific, but then the Battle of the Bulge came along late in 1944. And

we were hurriedly loaded on troop ships early in 1945, sent to Europe. I was with the 97th Infantry Division. I had been trained as a forward observer to travel with the forward units of the infantry and direct artillery fire, that hopefully would fall in front of us. When we got to Europe, I was asked if I would ride in the back seat of a little two-seater airplane and direct artillery fire from the plane. I had never been in an airplane in my life. My first airplane ride was at an altitude of about 2,000 feet over the German lines near Cologne. But by that time, the German army was virtually defeated. The German Air Force, the Luftwaffe, was virtually impotent. So riding in that little two-seater Piper Cub was almost like having a grandstand seat to a war. Occasionally, people would shoot at us. Some of them were our own troops, as a matter of fact. So, I was in combat for about four months. We alternated between George Patton's third army and Omar Bradley's first army. We could tell which army we were in because, if we were in Patton's third army, all we got were boxes of K rations, even though we hadn't moved. If the line had moved, we got regular rations that were cooked. But we finished the war down in Czechoslovakia. We actually liberated some of the slave camps, not concentration camps of Jews, but slave camps of displaced workers. Because we had been one of the last divisions sent into combat in Europe, we were sent back to the states, given new equipment, and a furlough. Then we were sent to Seattle, loaded on a troop ship, and we were at sea when the Peace Treaty with Japan was signed. We wandered around the South Pacific for a while, landed in Yokohama, and we were on occupation duty for about four months in an area of Japan about 100 miles northwest of Tokyo, Niigata, in the

mountains of the main island of Japan. We didn't really do much on occupation duty after the Japanese people realized we were not going to rape and pillage. It was a rather comfortable relationship. In fact, one night I was simply on duty in the local police station, and a Japanese man came in and indicated that he wanted to practice his English. And he was an engineering graduate from Ohio State University. I'm sitting in a small town in Japan, talking about the Oval. It was an almost out-of-body experience. And one of those things that I've written in my memoirs. So I got home in the spring of 1946. I wanted to go back to Ohio State, but couldn't get back in until the fall of 1946. That's a whole other story and I'm sure that the Archives has got a lot of history about the GI Bill and the flood of students. When I first came back, I lived in former bachelor's officer's quarters out at Port Columbus. And there were a couple of rattle-trap school buses that brought us back and forth from out at Port Columbus to the Oval for classes.

Q. Wow, I didn't know that. Now, when you were in the stadium dorms after you heard about Pearl Harbor, was it one of those things where there were 20 men in your room and then as the quarter went on more and more left because they were signing up, or was it they were trying to get as much school in as they could?

A. It was both. Some of the upper classmen had signed up voluntarily for advanced ROTC, and almost all of them were shipped out very soon, and they got commissioned as lieutenants. For those of us that were not in advanced ROTC, I guess in those days I was under the impression that the government knew what it was doing and I would just wait until they decided how I could best help them in the war effort. So I waited. There were several programs. My friend who

actually helped me get into the stadium dormitories was two years older than I. He signed up for a program, I believe it was called V-12 or something. The idea was that, if you volunteered for that, and you were a junior or a senior, they would let you finish out for your bachelor's and then you would immediately go into the Army. For the rest of us who were younger, and if you waited, you could either enlist and select your branch of the service, or you could wait until you were drafted. I actually went into the Army sooner than my two-year-older friend, but he, after he got his bachelor's degree, he was immediately shipped out, was a replacement in a division in the invasion of the Philippines, and was killed. So it was kind of like a sinister lottery as to just when you went in, where you went, and what happened. And that was typical. College students, some people said, "I'm going to volunteer." Some said, "I'm just going to wait until I'm drafted." Some of them signed up for that special program to be able to get their bachelor's before they went in. But I looked up some figures. In 1943 or 1944, the total enrollment at Ohio State University was like 6,500 students. In 1950, it was 26,000 as the veterans returned and everybody came in under the GI Bill.

Q. Right. Let's talk a little bit about the difference. I want to go back to your time in the stadium dorms and focus on that. But let's talk a little bit about the difference between living in the stadium dorm and what I learned from you right now is, you weren't even on campus when you came back.

A. No, that's right.

Q. What it hard to connect back to your studies and your friends when you weren't living right there?

A. For most of us, who were returning veterans, we had had three years out of our life. We were in a hurry. Many of us had seen the horrors of war. A lot of the returning veterans were married; some had children. And we tended to connect with the other veterans rather than to a particular place where we lived. And we were all in a hurry. A lot of us went year-around. We didn't take the summer off as we had, because we had enough financial support from the GI Bill, and sometimes part-time work, so we could go straight through without taking the summer off to work. And we were in a hurry. And so typically that's what we did, and where we lived was not that important. And particularly as you got in law school you had a group that became closely knit because you were in law school and were all going through the same kind of turmoil. And so, although the difference in living was pronounced, it wasn't something important, it was just one of those things that developed out of the situation. I ran into a few of my friends from the stadium dorms. And sometimes we connected for a short period of time. But you tended to relate to the people who were in the same major or the same college that you were, rather than the living accommodations. Whereas, when you lived in the stadium dormitories, that was your group. And it was an important group. There was a distinct feeling that we were the poor folks, that when you crossed High Street, there were fraternities and sororities, and we weren't a part of that. And so we became a fairly closely knit group, with at least that common feeling.

Q. Which you didn't care about. I mean, you didn't ever think about going back into the stadium dorms, did you? You just wanted to get your degree.

A. Right. Yes. And at that point, a lot of us were either married or engaged or shortly after we came back we went through that. And so that wasn't an option at that point. I got married in September of 1949. We lived in a so-called furnished apartment on Forsythe Avenue, which is at Neil and 5th Avenue. I think it was furnished with stuff from Lincoln's funeral train. It had a Murphy pull-down bed, an old stove with a side oven and the four legs. But it was great. That's the way you started out.

Q. Well, let's go back to the stadium dorm time. What did you do to contribute to the cooperative nature of the dorm? What were your duties?

A. Everybody did the same thing, basically. You rotated through: During the year you would be on KP several times, you washed dishes, you washed the pots and pans, you served the food, you cleared the table. Every Saturday the dorm room was scrubbed and cleaned. The windows were washed. The shower rooms were scrubbed down. All the toilets were cleaned. This was just the routine. And you were scheduled periodically and everybody went through that. Nobody was exempt from it. And you also answered the phone and greeted anybody that was not a member of the Club who showed up. And so those were your duties. That was expected of you. And you did it. You were also expected to maintain your grades, and if you didn't maintain grades you could be subject to no longer being allowed to live in the dorms.

Q. Now, you said on Saturdays you did all this cleaning. That immediately makes me think of football Saturdays. Did you still have to do that schedule on those Saturdays?

A. Normally, in those days, of course, the schedule wasn't dictated by television. And the games didn't start until about 1:30-2:00. But yes, it was not uncommon for us to be cleaning while the football crowd was arriving at the stadium.

Q. I've seen photos where, I think, you could look out your window and obviously see the inside of the stadium.

A. No, there maybe were a couple of windows in the Tower Club, but for the other Clubs and for most of the Tower Club, there was no way you could see the field. And that was one of the strict rules, you could not sneak into the game just because you lived in the stadium dormitories.

Q. Okay. There was a separate entrance for the dormitories as opposed to getting into the inside [of the stadium]?

A. Yes, it was on the ground floor and it was on the outside of the stadium.

Q. Could you hear the crowd?

A. Oh, yes. Yes, you could hear the crowd or listen to it on the radio. Some of the men worked in the concession stands or as ushers or whatever. Either volunteered or worked in one of the concession stands.

Q. But you didn't do that?

A. No, I didn't do that the first year, and the second year I tried out as a cheerleader and made the squad, so that the second year that I was there, the 1942 season, I was a cheerleader. Those were the good old days when there were no women cheerleaders. There were no women in the band. And because of travel restrictions of the war, for the 1942 season, the Illinois game was played in Cleveland Stadium. And there was some misguided but well-meaning alumni

who gave me a drink out of his pocket flask and I almost fell out of the second deck of Cleveland Stadium. In those days, incidentally, there was a railroad siding that came in by the powerhouse, not far from the stadium, and there were special trains that brought in fans by train in those days.

Q. Is that how you went up to Cleveland Stadium that time? Or no?

A. No, I hitchhiked a ride, I believe. Since it was close to home, it was an opportunity to get home for a weekend.

Q. I can't imagine that now because there are so many services built around the football team and the cheerleaders and the marching band. They have their own buses and that kind of thing. But you, as a cheerleader, had to hitch a ride.

A. Yes, yes. The cheerleaders nor the band were not given a lot of special treatment in those days. That was, incidentally, Paul Brown's first year. Because I was a cheerleader, instead of mopping floors at the Ohio Union, I got upgraded, I was able to get a job exchanging wet towels for dry ones in the men's gymnasium for 28 ½ cents an hour. And I remember Bill Willis, who is one of the icons of Ohio State football, I remember giving him towels. And in those days of course, the African Americans endured a lot of discrimination, even there.

Q. Have you been back to the stadium dorm, until they were closed obviously? When you returned from war, did you go back in to see what they looked like?

A. I did not at that point. Later on, I was a member of the stadium dormitory alumni association and was fairly active for several years in that and went back at that time.

Q. When you went back, did you think, "How did I sleep with 19 other people?"

A. No, I suppose three years in the Army, it was sort of an amazing development that, by living there and then spending three years in similar situations in the Army, it just didn't seem like it was that unusual.

Q. Well, it was unusual, students going off to college today, they build these nice new dorms for them and they have their own bathrooms. Even when I went to college 25 years ago, you did what you had to do. You were put where you were put.

A. Yes, and that was it.

Q. But all you had was a bed or half of a bunk bed?

A. Well, they were double-decker. You had a bunk bed and a steel locker.

Q. So that was where you stored your clothes and toiletries and that kind of thing?

A. Yes. And I came down to Ohio State with a limited wardrobe, I had an ugly green, discounted sport coat from Richmond Brothers, which was a cheap clothing store in those days. And in those days a lot of us had a fiber suitcase that we shipped back to mom with our laundry. And then it was mailed back to us. Eventually I think I began to do my own at the Club. And there were no washing machines and dryers in those days in the dormitories.

Q. So you were doing it by hand in the sink?

A. Yes.

Q. No wonder some of the people sent it back?

A. Yes. In the Clubs we had a lot of fun. We provided our own entertainment. I was a member of an impromptu theater group called the Buckeye Art Players, and I was a member of what was called the Buckettes. It was five guys. I was the

only short one. I was in the middle. The others were about six feet tall and we had scarlet-and-gray shorts and T-shirts, and then we all had two study lampshades attached by a cord under the T-shirts. We did a Rockette routine. We put together a lot of skits, some of them slightly on the raunchy side, and the executive committee would frequently get on us and try to clean up some of our acts. There wasn't much money for entertainment. Incidentally, one of the first Big Bear grocery stores was located north of the stadium in a former roller rink. And you walked from the stadium dormitories past an active dump to get to Big Bear to get a candy bar or snacks or whatever. And that was pretty typical. If you talk to any of the Buckeye Club residents of that period, and you ask them about Big Bear, they will all talk about that store because it was in an old roller rink. It was one of the early Big Bear stores.

- Q. Now, one of the things I noticed in the West Side Story newsletters we got, I just took a cursory glance, was they were always talking about pranks that had been played on people. And I assume that that was another [form of] entertainment.
- A. Yes, and if you were a freshman, it was pretty clear that there was going to be a certain amount of hazing before you were accepted as a true member of the Club. It was certainly true in the fraternities and sororities, and it was true also in the stadium dormitories. And a lot of it geared around throwing people into the Olentangy and sending them off on fictitious impossible errands that they were supposed to perform as freshmen. Later on, the freshmen usually tried to get revenge. And it was pretty common, particularly in the Tower Club, for a sound-sleeping upper classman to find the cot rolled out onto the top of that southwest

tower of the stadium. It happened fairly often as a matter of fact. And there were all kinds of things like that that went on. Hazing. And one of the things that each of the clubs did, as a freshman you didn't live in one room the entire year. You changed rooms each quarter so that you could get acquainted with another group of upper classmen. So the freshmen moved around. So you were in at least three rooms during your freshman year, and you got to know more of the upper classmen that way.

Q. Did that mean three opportunities for hazing, or was it by a certain quarter?

A. Yes, usually by spring quarter the hazing had died down. And also the clubs were very active in intramural sports. In spring there was softball season and that was a pretty intense time. So usually by spring quarter of the freshmen year the hazing had died down.

Q. Did you play on the softball team?

A. Yes, I played on the softball team. And I think I played touch football too. Because intramural [sports were] more a matter of having fun than it was competition. What the Clubs did frequently was to put the best athletes together on one team, and then the other teams were made up of however you wanted to put them together. And so the top team would play in the intramural league and try to beat the fraternity teams and do that, and the rest of us were pretty much playing for fun and exercise.

Q. Did you feel like you were, because you mentioned before about the fraternities and sororities being across High Street, did you get the sense that you were the underdog, sort of?

- A. Oh, absolutely. I mean, we were the poor folk.
- Q. But you couldn't tell that in class or could you?
- A. To some extent by what clothes you had, a little bit, not very much in that respect. But there was no doubt. We didn't have the kind of social life that existed across High Street. And there was a strong feeling that that was a dividing line. And if anything, I think it spurred most of us to be better students, to be better individuals. Just one of those things, that was the way it developed.
- Q. Now, I assume you [saw] - especially since you didn't live in the stadium dorms when you came back from the war - that that atmosphere might have changed a bit, or maybe not.
- A. I think it did. I think most of the veterans that came back, some of them, if they had been fraternity members before they went into the service, some of them went back into fraternity houses. But most, at that point, I don't think there was a lot of interest in fraternity life, because most of us, we were older, we were mature, we had been through an awful lot. And some of the things that traditionally were a part of fraternity life, weren't something we were interested in. I was a member of the legal fraternity, but that was a totally different thing. There was no fraternity house or anything like that.
- Q. I should have asked you, was your goal always to go to law school and become a lawyer when you went to Ohio State?
- A. No, when I came to Ohio State I wasn't sure what I wanted to major in. I had sort of a vague idea that I might want to be in journalism. In those days, you were in the College of Arts and Sciences. And you had to have two years of science. It's

a crazy idea, because I had had a good chemistry teacher in high school, I signed up for college chemistry. There I was with pre-meds and chemistry majors. There is a set of my unknowns over there still. I never did find out what was in it. And so I couldn't stay in the College of Arts and Sciences and in journalism without signing up for some more science, even though biology was supposed to be a cinch. At that point, I got more interested and decided I would go into what was then the Commerce College and maybe major in Accounting. And so that was the way it was when I went into the service. While I was on occupation duty in Japan, to keep us busy, the Army had all kinds of courses that you could take. I took a course in business law and decided, gee, with a GI Bill, I really like this, I'm going to try to go to law school. So, when I came back, in those days Ohio State had a program where in six years you got your undergraduate degree and your law degree. You did not have to have an undergraduate degree to get into law school. And so that was what I did. I went to law school.

Q. You got your degree in '49, right? Bachelor's in '48?

A. Bachelor's in '48 and law degree in December of 1949.

Q. And then what did you do?

A. My last quarter in law school I took a course in state and local taxation that was taught by the then Ohio Tax Commissioner, Emory Glander. And we had a long talk and he said, "Gee, if you're looking for a job when you graduate you might come and talk to me." So I started looking for job and interviewed. I remember interviewing in a small town, Lancaster, south of Columbus, with an individual practitioner down there. And he said, "Well, you've got a good record. I might

consider hiring you. It would be at about \$200 a month, and you'd have to understand there would be no opportunity for partnership until I see whether my son is going to be in practice with me." And I politely asked how old the son was and he was 13. So, I went to work for the Ohio Department of Taxation, good experience. I was there about 2 ½ years, and then I went with the Huntington National Bank as a trust officer and was there for about, I guess six or eight years, and then went in private practice, and been in private practice ever since.

Q. I'm going to stop the tape and turn it over right now.

Q. Good morning, this is Kevlin Haire at the University Archives. I'm interviewing Lloyd Fisher and this is tape one, side two. Mr. Fisher, you told me about your career. I want to go back to the stadium dorms a little bit because I want you to talk about how living in the stadium dorms affected possibly your career or how you approached life after that, although it might be that the war had obviously a much greater effect.

A. I don't think there's any doubt that living in the stadium dorms and that communal style of living, and being there with a group of students from freshmen to seniors, majors ranging from pre-med to agriculture to accounting, a wide spread group of interests, and a group of young men from varied backgrounds. Some from the city, many from the rural areas, to fit in day after day, close living quarters, sharing and grumbling about the work that you did, but forming real friendships. As I've thought about it in later years, I think that it was a really valuable experience. And everyone of the stadium alumni that I talk to feel substantially the same way. You almost instinctively began to understand that

how a person was dressed, what he looked like, what his accent might be, didn't really matter. That the character, the honesty, the integrity were the important parts of what kind of a person he was. And under those circumstances, it became clear fairly early on about that person. And sure, there were people in the Club that you disliked occasionally. Some you obviously liked more than others. But it was sort of a caldron that very quickly the good material rose to the top and you began to recognize that. And I don't think that would have happened in other kinds of living arrangements as quickly and as forcibly as it did there. I think that if I had lived in, for instance, a fraternity house or if I had lived just in a rooming house, I wouldn't have had that kind of experience. And I think it's hung on. I've spent most of my professional career doing primarily estate planning, dealing with people with substantial amounts of money. And even early on I was not impressed simply by people who had acquired a lot of money. A lot of millionaires are really great substantial people, and some of them are horse's asses. And you know, I believe that, even though it was only like a year and a half in the stadium dormitories, it was a great initial experience to begin to look at life and to look at the people around you, and how you related to them.

Q. I lost my train of thought. I was so intent on listening to you. I know what I was going to ask, because you mentioned before the tape started you are friends with John Mount, who has been involved in the stadium dorms. I don't think he ever lived there.

A. He actually did in the early days. He lived in the Tower Club I think at least a year or two. He's a couple of years older than I am. I believe he did, or at least he was connected with the Clubs fairly directly early on.

Q. Okay. But you've been friends for your whole lives, I guess.

A. Yes, pretty much.

Q. Do you have other friends like that, that you've stayed connected with from the dorms?

A. A few. They've spread all over. And there are names that you remember; for instance recently, Dr. Zussman died. He was in the Clubs at the same time I was. I've kept in touch with a few of the people that I knew. Probably had you been there four years, there would have been more friendships that you would have hung on to. But because we got really dispersed by serving in the Armed Forces. I don't think anybody went back into the Club, or very few. So it was a fairly short period, and then I got reacquainted to some extent with the gubernatorial alumni association. But yes, I've got a few friends. For instance, Riley Dugan, he's a retired professor of agriculture and economics. I see him every now and then, get together with him sometimes. Yes, there are a few.

Q. Talk about your involvement in the Alumni Association. From what I see, it's not nearly as intense as the marching band alumni. But it seems pretty intense, that you all obviously have this bond and want to share it with each other, but also want people to remember the entity that existed at this University that unfortunately no longer exists because of other circumstances.

A. Some years back I was fairly active in the Stadium Dormitory Alumni Association. I haven't been in recent years just because my interests have sort of drifted in other ways. But I still keep in touch with some of the people.

Q. What was your involvement when you were in the Association?

A. I think I might have been on the Board for a while. Typically they have one football game where they have alumni return and that sort of thing and I did that for several years.

Q. Okay. One of my questions on the list here was about the changes to the stadium dorms over the years. For example, they admitted women in 1975 or they decided to admit. I think it was several years before they actually became members. What did you think of that at the time because you made a joke earlier about when we didn't have women cheerleaders in the good old days. But what did you think at the time when you heard this?

A. I thought that was great. I never had any qualms about that.

Q. But did you think, how are they going to do this?

A. Well, I think by that time they had remodeled to where it was almost like a traditional dormitory with two-person rooms as I recall. So I thought it was a pretty easy decision once they had done the remodeling. It would have been pretty tough if they had retained the old format because those common shower rooms would have created some real problems.

Q. What are some of the other significant changes that you can think of with the dorms, if you know of any? Obviously, the renovation so that they are far more

traditional. I assume that the standards stayed the same of who got in. You had to have financial need and have a certain level of scholarship.

A. That was always my understanding of it. And I think that pretty much continued so long as they were in existence. And I don't know that there's any similar thing available now. I don't know whether there are any scholarship dorms.

Q. There are.

A. There are scholarship dorms, but I don't think they are set up on a cooperative basis.

Q. No, they're not.

A. And I don't know whether that's feasible in this day and age or not. As we're sitting here now in 2009, in the midst of the Depression, I would think it might be something that could be considered along the way somewhere.

Q. That's true. I assume you've been to football games since you graduated.

A. Well, when I'm really feeling like a smart Alec I tell people that I was a cheerleader in 1942 and then I grew up. I attended football games while I was in law school. I've attended some since. I'm not a rabid football fan. As a matter of fact, I have very mixed emotions about why running a free farm club for the NFL should be part of higher education. I've written a few nasty articles to Gordon Gee and to The Dispatch along those lines. It's an industry. And it's a pageant. I haven't been for years but to me the best part of it is the band and the crowd. I don't really care that much about what happens as far as football is concerned. And I've got a friend in the development department. A year or so ago, several years ago, when the football team was almost national champion, and

I said, “Do you see an increase in the number of gifts when the football team is successful?” And he said, “Well, you get a slight increase in gifts to the athletic department, but not as far as general giving is concerned.” And I thought that was pretty interesting.

Q. That is pretty interesting. Well, I asked you that because I wondered if you, and it doesn't have to be related to a football game, but if you would take your children by the stadium or a friend and would say, “I lived there,” and what their reaction would be.

A. You're right. When you tell people that you lived under Ohio Stadium, you get this look and they think somehow or other maybe you were connected with the football program or something, because it isn't common knowledge that there were just some dormitories that were built under the stadium. It happened to be a pretty handy place to build the kind of accommodations they wanted to construct.

Q. It could have been any building. It just happened to be, architecturally, it fit what they were trying to do.

A. Yes. And it was a cheap place to build those kind of cheap accommodations.

Q. Are you amazed that the dorms there lasted as long as they did given how, you talked about this a few minutes ago, the focus on making money through the football program? To me it's amazing that it lasted so long that there was space in that stadium that wasn't geared toward getting more people in or getting them to spend more money.

A. That's right. And as a matter of fact, in the period of time when I was somewhat active in the Stadium Dorm Alumni Association, I got the impression that the

University and the Athletic Department, while they were trying to accommodate it, they were clearly putting substantial pressure on moving those dormitories out of there and being able to use that space for something else. I don't think there was any question about that.

Q. Right.

A. And it made sense from their standpoint.

Q. Well, the main purpose of the stadium is the football program. So that would make sense. I lost my train of thought. As a totally unrelated question, were there rivalries between the three clubs or a certain standing order? I would assume the Tower Club ...

A. Well, because the Tower Club was a little bit older than the other two, they always sort of tried to say that they were the original. And yes, there were strong rivalries between the clubs, in intramural athletic teams, in scholarship ratings, in grade point averages. And how many exchange dinners you had with the women's dorms. There was really sharp rivalry among the clubs. It was a friendly rivalry, but it was pretty severe.

Q. That's pretty amazing that you had a rivalry with grade point average. You don't hear that much with dormitories.

A. It was. That was one of the things about the dormitories, that the proctor in your room, if it looked like you were goofing off and spending too much time going to High Street and drinking beer or whatever, there was no hesitancy to talk about that. Because there was intra-club rivalry among the floors as to scholarship, as

well as the inter-club rivalry among the three clubs in terms of the total combined average grade point. The scholarship was a part of it.

Q. Wow. Now, you mentioned earlier that you were considered the poor folks and you just talked about your dinners with the women's dorms. Did that affect your luck in general with the ladies, that you were the poor folks?

A. You know, I don't know how much of it was simply sort of our own self consciousness, but I suspect there was. If the freshmen women in the women's dorms had an opportunity to go to an exchange dinner in a fraternity house as opposed to coming down to the stadium, I think you had to have a certain amount of real character to say, "Yeah, I'd rather go to the stadium." But yes, we did have those. But I think there was a very real feeling that we were the poor folks.

Q. I don't know if you've been in Lincoln or Morrill Towers ever but you probably know how they're set up.

A. Right.

Q. And the reputation of how people crammed in there like sardines. If you had the same financial aid package, would you live in one of the towers or live in the stadium dorms, or can you even compare the two?

A. I guess with the wisdom of 85 years, I would do the stadium thing, just because there's something about that group life that develops a spirit that I don't think you get when people live two by two in separate rooms. Now you can argue whether it's good or bad. But, as I say, looking back on it, I would clearly pick that. Because yes, there were times when it was a real pain in the neck, but it was fun. And you got to know people. And you know, you got a feeling for interacting

with people under different kinds of circumstances. Complaining because their radio was too loud and arguing about courses and scholastic stuff. Or the world situation or sports or whatever, in a way that I don't think it quite fostered by the two by two traditional dormitory set up at most colleges. And both of my kids went to Wooster, which is a pretty typical liberal arts school. And they had that experience.

Q. You don't think they would want to live in the stadium dorms?

A. I don't know, maybe my son would. But I don't know.

Q. You mentioned studying. They didn't have set studying hours in the dorms, right? You were on your own for where and when you studied?

A. Yes, but as soon as the dinner dishes were cleared, the main dining room became a study hall. And it was strictly enforced. There was no loud talking. If you wanted to talk to somebody you had to leave the dining room. It was a common study hall. The hallways, the reception areas in between the sleeping rooms were also study areas, but they didn't have the strict quiet that the dining hall had. And you could study in your sleeping room too, but again, somebody might be playing the radio softly or whatever. But the study hall hours in the dining hall were strictly enforced.

Q. Was there a lights-out time?

A. In the sleeping rooms but not in the dining hall/study hall.

Q. Okay, so you could stay up studying and just kind of creep into the sleeping room?

- A. I forget what the hour was, probably 11:00, but I don't remember. There was a lights-out time in the sleeping rooms, but not in the study halls, either the dining hall or the reception area.
- Q. Do you think if the war hadn't interrupted your studies, you would have stayed in the stadium dorms your whole time? You probably would have had to?
- A. I think I would have for sheer economic reasons, if nothing else. But no, I liked it. I liked the people. I liked the way of life. And I'm sure that I would have stayed there. I was very happy there.
- Q. I ask this of everyone just to get a sense of your connection to the University then and now. What are your connections in the University now?
- A. I'm a life member of the Alumni Association. I taught as an adjunct in the law school for about ten years. I'm not active in the Alumni Association, particularly.
- Q. I saw on our online bio that you've been teaching at OPERS, Ohio Public Employer Retirement System.
- A. I haven't done that in the last year or so but yes, I used to do those. They have a pre-retirement program where they go through their pension benefits, their health insurance. They have an investment course in it and then I taught an hour on estate planning.
- Q. Is there anything else you want to say about the stadium dorms, any particular event or overall attitude you have about it? Or about the University in general?
- A. I think the stadium dormitories were a unique institution. I would hope, what I see now in terms of disappointment is, I don't believe that a young high school student now can come to Ohio State, work in the summer and even work part-

time while they're attending school and come out with a degree without the burden of a loan, that was possible for me primarily because of the stadium dormitories. And I think it's a shame that that can't happen now. In fact, I sent an e-mail to Gordon Gee along those lines. I don't know what the solution is, but I believe that we need something like that. We need particularly for a somewhat tax-supported institution, we need to try to educate Ohio residents. We need to try to do it in a way that will encourage them to stay here, and to do it in a way that doesn't saddle them with a real burden of debt when they come out the other end. And I don't see that as a real possibility now. Maybe I'm wrong, but from what I hear and what I see, I think it would be really difficult to do that. I have a warm feeling for the University. I'm not a rabid graduate or alumni. Both of my kids went to a small liberal arts college here in Ohio. And Ohio has a number of really good ones. And fortunately I was making enough that they could attend those colleges. But I'm a strong believer in public education. I just wish there was something similar now that was available to smart, studious students that could mean that they could attend college whereas otherwise they may not be able to do it.

Q. Do you have any other general thoughts?

A. I don't want to talk about the football program. I really shouldn't.

Q. Maybe another time. I should actually do a series of oral history interviews about people and their relationship to the football program because that would be very interesting to see how it's changed to what it is now.

A. Yes, I think it has. And you know, I don't blame the University entirely about that. Obviously the football program supports the rest of the athletic programs. I'm not sure what all that has to do with higher education. It would seem to me that if you're saying participating in an athletic team is a worthwhile educational experience, then we ought to have mandatory physical education as part of the degree requirements. It's just a huge industry. I think Jim Tressell does a good job at what his job is. It's the job that's the problem. What he's doing is running a free farm club for the NFL under an arcane set of rules that try to make the whole thing look like an amateur part of higher education, and it ain't necessarily so.

Q. Well, thank you Mr. Fisher, I appreciate your time and I appreciate you talking to us.

A. Hey, I enjoyed that. How long have you been here, Kevlin?