

An Oral History  
An Interview of a Grinnellian  
Glenn Leggett May 1, 1993  
by Amy Anderson

GL: ...try the noise first, I mean, to see how it records

AA: um, I checked it already.

GL: You did?

AA: this morning, yeah, so I'm gonna... Alright, this is May 1, 1993. My name is Amy Anderson and today I'm talking with Fred Luppett at, er, Glenn Leggett, did I- she told me Fred Luppett. That was,

GL: No, that's wrong

AA: Oh, I'm thinking the wrong thing. Alright, that's a good way to start

GL: Eight o'clock in the morning.

AA: (giggles) Glenn Leggett. Um, Grinnell Iowa about early life in Poweshiek County, but we'll probably deviate from that quite a bit and uh, Why don't we start off with, um, where and when you were born.

GL: Well, I'm a war baby. I was born in a small town in northeastern Ohio on Lake Erie in 1918, the year that the First World War ended. My father was a newspaper editor and my mother was a registered nurse, so I was the first born in the family. When it was all over I had three brothers and a sister One of the brothers died at a very early age as an infant and another brother died when he was twelve years old of a mastoid infection. But I was raised in a very happy, secure family and even during the Depression years I never remember suffering particularly from want of enough food or clothes or anything else, although I was of course perfectly aware of the Depression. I delivered newspapers when I was a youngster and one thing I remember is in 1928, the year that Herbert Hoover ran for President against Al Smith, I sold extras on the street at five o'clock in the morning. and I remember to this day the headline which said Hoover Wins By a Landslide and I often think of that experience when I go through the Hoover Library and Museum in Westbranch, Iowa. Uh, I went to public school and graduated from highschool in 1936, then went on to Middlebury College in Vermont, where I spent four years and eventually graduated with an A.B. in English and History.

AA: What made you decide on English and History?

GL: Well, I just, I , my father had been a newspaper editor so that books and writing were always topics of discussion in the family and it just seemed natural to me to uh, pick it up. I thought at one time I wanted either to be a newspaper man or a lawyer. I really had no indication that I wanted to be an academician. But, when I graduated in 1940, uh, the War in Europe, of course, was beginning to heat up considerably. All of the uh, young men, and not all of them, but most of the young men in my class were isolationists. We really didn't know at that time what despicable people the uh, Hitler was and we really weren't completely aware what the Japanese atrocities in the Far East. And we were sort of anti-war, but we never got organized the way the uh, Vietnam demonstrators did. And when the uh, Japanese bombed Pearl Harbor,

of course, we all thought immediately of enlisting. Our attitude changed considerably.

AA: What were you doing, (I'm sorry, I didn't mean to interrupt) but, what, I'm just curious, what were you doing the night of, I mean, what, how did you find out about...

GL: Well, after I graduated from Middlebury, I worked in during that summer after graduation Cleveland Ohio for the Cleveland Electric Illuminating Company. Uh, in at, that was a decent job, and I lived in an apartment in, uh, near Western Reserve University, but I, the wa-, I had a high draft number so that I knew that I wasn't going to be drafted for awhile and the war really hadn't started. So I went down to Ohio State where the tuition was cheap and um, thought, well, I'll either go into the law school or the English Department or maybe the journalism school. But I went down there in the summer and the journalism and law schools were closed temporarily between terms, so I went into the English department and I registered as a graduate student and thought, well, maybe I can get a quarter or two term under my skin before I'm drafted. Well, as the truth is, I went the whole year, and I ended up getting a Master's degree and in the process I discovered that I really liked graduate study. I married my childhood sweetheart in June of 1941 and uh, stayed down at Ohio State. I took a job as a night janitor uh, in one of the government buildings and during the day, I waited on tables for my meals and my wife worked as a clerk in a department store. Well, I continued for another year after that M.A. and decided that I might just as well start toward a Ph.D., even though I had really no hopes of getting much more than a few months toward it.

AA: Mmm, hmmm.

GL: At that time, I got an offer to go to MIT to teach English Communications, as it was called in those days, to the Army Student Training Program, ASTP, and Navy V-12 students. And so we went to Boston and I taught there a year um, in MIT in the department of English and History. And then I thought, well, my draft number was getting awfully close and I thought first of all, to see if I could get an Officer's Commission, but I discovered much to my amazement, that my color perception was highly imperfect. But, uh, and so that they just rejected me on those grounds. Well, then I decided that the war was the great adventure of my generation and I decided to enlist. At that time, our first child was expected and uh, just after she was born, we moved back to my folks' house in northeastern Ohio and my wife and the baby lived there while I went to Great Lakes and entered recruit training.

AA: Mmmm.

GL: I was in the Navy for a couple of years. Most of that time was spent at the Great Lakes Training Center because I was really attached to a recruit training command. I saw very little action, but when the war ended, by that time, we had another child, two children, two girls, uh, I thought I discovered that because I was attached to recruit training and then switched over to the separation command, that I had to spend another four months in the Navy before I could be discharged. Well, as soon as I was discharged, I went back to Ohio State, hoping that I could have my whole teaching assistantship back. But I discovered then that Ohio

State was just booming with GI students, and there were 5,000 freshman scheduled to take freshman English. And because of my experience and my age, I was offered not simply a teaching assistantship, but an instructorship. That meant, of course, that I had to slow down my graduate study, my work toward the Ph.D., but by that time, as I told you, I had two children, and uh, I really needed a full-time job. But anyway, I did- I continued my graduate work on a piecemeal basis and by 1949, I had the Ph.D. and I began looking around for a job. I stayed at Ohio State two more years as an assistant professor teaching English and then I got a chance to go to the University of Washington as an associate professor of English. By that time, we had a third child, another girl, three girls,

AA: (giggles)

GL: so we sold all our possessions, jumped into a Ford stationwagon and drove from Columbus, Ohio, to Seattle, with everything that we owned, really,

AA: Wow...

GL: in the back of the stationwagon.

AA: That must have been quite a trip. (laughs)

GL: (Pause) Can we stop for a minute?

AA: Oh, sure. Sure...

GL: We took, uh, almost two weeks to drive across the country from Columbus, Ohio, to Seattle, because we did a lot of sightseeing on the way. Now you have to remember that this was an early Ford stationwagon and I had three little girls in the back.

AA: What were their names?

GL: Lesley, Susan and Cyllinda, who was named after my mother. Both my parents were dead by that time, they died, really, of, to use the old-fashioned word, strokes, hypertension and that kind of illness. And so, uh, we really were starting out anew and we decided to see as much of the country as we could. I think we averaged about three hundred miles a day.

AA: Mmmm.

GL: Because though we'd get an early start, put the kids in the stationwagon while they were sound asleep, and maybe drive 150 or 200 miles before they were fully awake and active. As soon as we'd had lunch, they began looking around for places to run and play and motels with swimming pools. And of course, in those days, there weren't many such motels. So we.. but we had a marvelous time and saw the country. We had one experience, I remember, in Cody, Wyoming, where we were told that if we drove up the side of the mountain, we would see a marvelously scenic view. Somehow we got lost on the way up and coming back, we got on a very bad road- so bad that uh, I was a little frightened and I made the girls and Mrs. Leggett get out of the car while I proceeded very slowly across a bridge- a narrow bridge across a high chasm. When I got on the other side, then the women joined me and we found our way back alright, but when we arrived back at the motel, and the motel owner asked us how we liked the view, I gave an experience, I gave him the story of our experience, and he said, "Well, you took the wrong turn and that was a very dangerous road indeed." And I said, "Well, I couldn't back up, it was too narrow" and uh, I had told him what I had seen and he said after I got all through, he said,



"You were lucky because the last person who tried that, his automobile fell off that cliff..."

AA: Oh, my gosh.. (laughs slightly)

GL: "...into the gorge below." So that was an experience we talked about for a long time.

AA: Mmm.

GL: But when we were going across the country on that slow drive, I had the opportunity to, you know, think of some of the things that had happened to me as I was growing up because I'd left the life of that small, northeastern Ohio town behind me. Uh, and I thought a good deal of my parents, who had really just died, of course, and one of the things that I remember is my twelve-year old brother, who is the youngest child in the family, and a very active, pleasant youngster, had taken ill with a mastoid infection. Now nobody even hears of a mastoid infection these days, but in those days, it was quite common. It was as common as polio, which was a terrifying prospect for mothers and fathers of young children. Those were the days of the iron lung, of course, and long before the vaccine. And long before the discovery of sulfa(?) and long, long before the discovery of penicillin, so that a mastoid infection could be very serious, and it turned out to be. So anyway, young brother's case and he died in the hospital because they simply couldn't control the runaway infection. And I remember how hard that was on the whole family to lose a twelve-year old son and sibling. And, uh, then I remember the, uh, my years at the college and I think I spoke earlier of how isolationist we young men in those late thirties were. There was even an organization called the Veterans of Future Wars and we did some marching downtown, you know, but nobody really took it very seriously in those days. Young people were not taken with the extreme seriousness, at least their notions, with which they are now, and were as I can tell you, in the late sixties and early seventies, during the anti-Vietnam demonstrations. But anyway, we finally arrived at Seattle, and it was, and uh, we lived for awhile in a housing development managed by the university, but after awhile, we managed to buy a house in one of the suburbs in Seattle. And that's really where I began seriously my career. I was in the English department for about six years, I wrote some textbooks, taught some, all, the whole range of courses in the seventeenth and eighteenth century, including, of course, in Milton and one in Johnathan Swift, liked it very much, but was young and ambitious and I got a chance to go over, when the University of Washington got a new president, I got a chance to go over to his office as an assistant, half-time assistant to him, to worry about admissions. Well, I shortly discovered that there is really no such thing as a half-time job in that business, that I was working from early morning until late at night, still trying to keep up my teaching in English and my scholarship. So that when, in a year or two, he asked me to come over full time and though I was still a member of the English department, and I think I taught maybe one course a year for awhile, eventually I became a full-time academic administrator and I ended up as the provost of the University of Washington, which is the old-fashioned title for the Vice President for Academic Affairs. My job there was really to look after the

deans, there were some fourteen or fifteen at the University of Washington, including the medical, the dental, the nursing, the engineering, the architectural, business school, and of course, the college of liberal arts, and I've probably forgotten three or four others. And my job really was to talk to the deans about the academic program and faculty. Well, I had that job for about three or four years, and then in 1965, I got the opportunity to come to Grinnell as its President.

AA: Was Grinnell, um, did a lot of people know about Grinnell in those days?

GL: Yes, I knew about it because my wife's mother went to school here.

AA: Mmm.

GL: And uh, she used to talk a good deal about Grinnell. It had a very distinguished history, somewhat like Carleton, and Oberlin, and Swarthmore, and so forth. It wasn't as well-to-do as those colleges, and perhaps, it was on a tier of reputation just slightly below, but it was a very well-known, very well-known school. And I've always been interested in graduate teaching, and so when the chance came to come to Grinnell, I took it up. And I arrived here in 1965 in the summer. I was particularly impressed with the Board of Trustees and with the few faculty people I had met, all of whom now, of course, are retired, as I am. The, um, in those days, Grinnell... the student body was rigidly divided so far as the residence halls were concerned, by sex. The women lived on the South Campus and the men lived on the North Campus and never the twain shall meet, sort of, worked. I mean, that was the notion. We had a very old-fashioned, powerful Dean of Women who worked, obviously, worked on the supposition that if she could get all the women locked up at ten o'clock at night on the South Campus, that took care of the situation. But of course, it didn't, because the men lived in the North Campus, and the destruction (pause) they wreaked during the weekend on those residence halls was unbelievable. And I could see right away that this old-fashioned notion of keeping the men and the women physically separated that way wasn't going to work at all, and the truth is, it wasn't because there was just as much sin as the word on the campus in those days as there is now.

AA: Was this, um, was the separation like, typical of colleges at the time?

GL: No, I, not really, all the college, most colleges I knew were beginning to relax a little bit about that business. You know, uh, but Grinnell went straight ahead with this old-fashioned notion of the rigid separation and it was... it really wasn't a pleasant environment. You know, young people are going to get together one way or another.

AA: Right.

GL: And regulations about no women in mens' rooms, you know, except under very supervised procedures- it just didn't work, and so you, we were always having judicial council meetings, and in some cases, dismissing students or threatening them with dismissal and so forth and I really wasn't comfortable with that sort of business at all and I wanted to, my long-range plan was to get some of the dormitories on the North Campus as women dormitories and some on

the South Campus as men dormitories. But the students went way ahead of me- they just pushed it so hard, there were demonstrations and sit-ins and all that kind of thing.

AA: Mmm.

GL: And by that time, the old dean of women had retired, she was really a marvelous, marvelous woman in her own way.

AA: What was her name?

GL: Evelyn Gardner. But she did have these very old-fashioned notions of keeping the sexes arbitrarily separated. And of course, it didn't work.

AA: Umm, hmm.

GL: Uh, well, with by the late sixties, we had the dormitory situation, residence hall situation, that you have now. And as far as I can see, it... nothing works perfectly when you get twelve hundred young people together, but it was working as well as it had before, and it seemed to be much more comfortable and natural and easy. I don't think that the present student body even thinks of the possibility of any other kind of arrangement. There occasionally, I had hopes, of course, that we could have one or two residence halls reserved for seniors by sex who are so intent on getting their final year and getting themselves ready for graduate school and professional school that that separate system would work. And maybe, maybe they have it now. I don't know, are there any halls, single-sex dorms?

AA: Um, there are single-sex floors in some dorms that are just women or just men, but all the dorms are coed. But, I mean, there are a few floors that are just women or men.

GL: But it's a comfortable arrangement, isn't it?

AA: Oh, yeah. Everyone...

GL: All right.

AA: Even on the coed floors there aren't any... yeah, people get together whether there are women living next door or men, it seems.

GL: Yeah, well, the real problem was not so much on the campus, but with the alumni and parents...

AA: Oh, boy...

GL: who, uh, really, for some reason, were outraged by this whole business. You know, young people are raised in homes, a lot of them with single bathrooms, they've got brothers and sisters, that's not a problem. You just close the door. (Amy laughs) And uh, maybe you don't even do that, but there was all of this worry among the older alumni and among some parents, not all of them, that the change from the single-sex dormitory, residence halls, was somehow indecent and would promote a kind of loose morality that as far as I can see, never did, there. At any rate, it wasn't any looser than it always had been. (Amy laughs) And...

AA: Did they mostly complain to you?

GL: They complained to me, and at alumni meetings, and I had all sorts of irate letters and so forth and of course, the Des Moines Register, as you would expect, made the most of this kind of conflict.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: Uh, what really pushed that to the background, however, was the Vietnam War and the anti-Vietnam feeling that spread to all college

campuses, particularly to liberal, undergraduate colleges like Oberlin, and Carleton, and Grinnell, with a highly selective student body with all kinds of notions about how the world ought to be run and how it ought not to be run.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: And so I would say that beginning about 1968, Grinnell College went through four or five years of almost constant demonstrations of one kind or another. And I can remember the 1969 commencement was interrupted by some students. We had, uh, we decided to give an honorary degree to the President of Lawrence University, who was, quite frankly, a good friend of mine...

AA: Um, hmm.

GL: ...member of the ACM with me. And uh, a distinguished person.

AA: Oh, excuse me, I'm sorry, what's the ACM?

GL: Associated Colleges of the Midwest. That's the...

AA: Oh...

GL: That's the academic conference we're in.

AA: Okay.

GL: That's Lawrence and Carleton and Monmouth and Cornell and Ripon, Lake Forest, et cetera, it's...

AA: Mm, hmm.

GL: The other side of it is the athletic conference, you see,

AA: Oh...

GL: ...but it was also an academic conference. I mean, we exchanged students and in some cases, faculty, and we had similar programs, particularly overseas. And it was a lively academic conference.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: Well, anyway, just before commencement, this chap, whose name was Curtis Tarr, resigned as President of Lawrence and went to Washington as an Undersecretary of State.

AA: Hmm.

GL: That upset some of the students, who, in those days, regarded the older generation as, um, unfeeling and not sufficiently aware of, uh, the immorality of the Vietnam War.

AA: What were your feelings on the Vietnam War?

GL: Well, I thought it was a mistake, you know, I mean...

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: ...I did, but I'd, I think probably I wondered why, for awhile at any rate, I wondered why students thought they ought to take it out on the college. I mean, the college didn't really have anything to do with that war any more than the students themselves. But in those days, students, that was the closest thing, a closest representation of the Establishment that students could think of. I sup- that may be true now, to some extent. And so they took their resentment out on the college and there were constant demonstrations and interruptions of one kind or another. And you know, that even though not all students were involved in it, the typical Grinnell student is a live-and-let-live person.

AA: Right.

GL: Let people do their own thing. And some of the younger faculty were involved in it, too, you know, they were people who had just gotten out of graduate school and many of them, I think, were not



sufficiently aware that there is a distinction between being a faculty person and a student...

AA: Oh.

GL: ...particularly as it relates to the institution. Well anyway, ex-President Curtis Tarr, we were going to give him an honorary degree of Humane Letters, and a student, as we were awarding it to him, Joe Wall was the Dean at that time, this young man got up with a sign saying "Doctor of Inhumane Letters" and there was a demonstration for about, oh, three or four minutes. And, by that time, I had escorted the young student who had the placard off the stage and we continued with the commencement. But that was in 1969. In 1970, we never had a commencement because just before we were scheduled to go through for commencement, the Kent State business happened.

AA: Okay...

GL: And, of course, that turned the campus into a total turmoil. The people who had been somewhat neutral about the Vietnam War where they, up to that point, weren't anymore.

AA: Um, hmm.

GL: I would say the whole campus was a tinderbox, including, you know, a substantial element of the faculty. Now, of course, I was mad, too...

AA: Right.

GL: Uh, it was a- the notion that you can solve a problem by escalating it, as they did, as they've done several times,

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: ...is just not true. I mean, uh, you- when a situation like that arises, the best thing to do is to use everything in your power to deescalate it so you can talk to people calmly.

AA: Right.

GL: To meet that sort of force or threat of force with more force, that doesn't solve any problem. You just have more dead bodies around.

AA: Um, hmm.

GL: Uh, and so- but it was pointless. We were very close to having a commencement, finals were just around the corner, and I thought if we can just hang on for four or five more days...

AA: Yeah.

GL: ...why, we would make it. But it became clear that we couldn't.

AA: Now when you say um, demonstrations, I mean, were people just all the time just sitting in, uh, well, where- where did the demonstrations take place, for one thing?

GL: Well, one thing, we had an ROTC program...

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: ...and it was, it was a small one. But the ROTC house was at the corner of Eighth and Park.

AA: Okay.

GL: Still there, I mean, it's not an ROTC house, it's a college house.

AA: Yeah.

GL: And the students occupied that.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: And luckily, at that time, Grinnell had an absolutely marvelous



chief of police with a real understanding of young people. His name was Bill Peters. He'd been- he was an ex-army...

[Tape runs out of room on Side One]

AA: ROTC house, I think.

GL: That's right. I was talking about Chief Bill Peters, wasn't I?

AA: Yes, the chief of police.

GL: Okay, let's go.

AA: (Laughs) Okay...

GL: Bill Peters had been an army MP and he was, uh, he was very tough and strong, but he had a great regard for students and students really had a high regard for him. He had a sense of humor, and he would kid them. And when they occupied the building, I went over there. And the big question, of course, was whether to call the police. And I resolved not to. There were maybe fifteen students in there, in the building. And I went in and talked to them. And before they went in, they had been jumping on the porch, I suppose in order to build up their adrenaline and their courage. (Amy laughs) You know, these are eighteen and nineteen and twenty-year olds, and I knew most of them. And in the process of jumping up and down, they broke- or, the jumping broke a big plate-glass window in the front.

AA: Oh, wow.

GL: And that's government property, you see, and that worried me.

AA: Yeah.

GL: But I went in, and I had no sooner got in, and reminded them that it was government property, and they had already taken up a collection to pay for the window.

AA: Oh!

GL: And they handed it to me. And it was a lot more money than the window would have cost. But I thought, well, it's okay, I'll take it anyway, (Amy laughs) I'll turn it over to Buildings and Grounds. And they s- and I went out, and by that time, Bill Peters had arrived. And he was sitting on the porch. They were, by that time, they had gone in, too. And he was looking at the street, not at the students. And I wondered what he was doing and there were cars driving by on Eighth Avenue, slowly. And as I looked at them, I could see they, the cars, were full of bullyboys, townboys. Peters turned to me and he says, "That's the local vigilante group. They worry me a lot more than students". Now it's probably impossible for students in this day and age to realize the resentment in town among certain elements of the town population of the anti-Vietnam stance of Grinnell's college students.

AA: Now the town did not appreciate that at all?

GL: Not at all, now, you know, you still have- students still have trouble in town occasionally.

AA: Mm, hmm.

GL: You know, a single male, particularly a black, walking downtown at eleven o'clock is going to be accosted. And, (Amy mumbles something unintelligible) They are, I read about it every once in awhile. But this i- that's isolated. In those days, it was extremely strong and we advised students not to go downtown unless they were in large groups. Now Bill Peters's police force did the

best they could, but you can't control everybody. But Peters, as I said, was really more worried about the vigilante groups doing damage than he was about the students. You see, Grinnell students in those days were a lot like Grinnell students now: they're talkers...

AA: (Laughing) Right.

GL: ...they're intellectuals, they're sophisticates. They're not people who, ah, believe in the use of force.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: They're terribly trusting, that's just the Grinnell character. They think they can go into any house and start talking and they'll be listened to. Well, of course, they aren't, always, at least with kindness and gentleness. Well, it became clear to me, after awhile, in talking to students and faculty and other people, that there was no point in going through with commencement, because it would be interrupted from the beginning to the point where it might become threatening, at least to some Grinnell students, you know...

AA: You mean, interrupted by the townspeople?

GL: Yeah, or interrupted by, ah, interrupted by a core of Grinnell students who I thought had really almost lost their minds and their sanity.

AA: Were these mostly male, were they all male, or were some of them female?

GL: No, no, not all, they were half and half, yeah, you know, and I knew them, and then, they were- most of them were extraordinarily good students and in ordinary circumstances very sane and rational, but they had been pushed to the limit on this Vietnam War and the Kent State business just scared them to death. They were frightened. You know, I wasn't going to call the National Guard, the National Guard was at Iowa City.

AA: Oh..

GL: Not only that, but I was not interested in getting young people-volunteers in the National Guard- on this campus, because I knew pretty much what would happen. One itchy trigger finger and you've got a major tragedy, just as they had at Kent State. If I ha- if I were going to have the police, Bill Peters and I had talked about this before, we were going to get the Sheriff's deputies who were trained police officers who weren't interested in shooting anybody, and they would have just carried students out.

AA: Mm,hmm.

GL: Except that how many deputies are you talking about-ten or fifteen? That's twelve hundred students, you can't manage that.

AA: Yeah.

GL: And Bill Peters had a police force of five or six. And a jail, maybe, that would hold three or four people. (Amy laughs slightly) And, I just didn't want to go through that and neither, neither did the faculty and so we just decided to close the school early to talk- and the faculty talked to every student about his course of study, about incompletes and all that kind of business. And we closed the school. Students left and went home. I thought for awhile, you know, that a lot of 'em would hang around and pitch tents in the middle of the campus and try to carry on, but they didn't.

AA: Mmm,hmm.

GL: The important thing, I think is-, at least in my mind, is if we

could get students off the college grounds, away from their peer groups, which kept turning them on, home where their families were in small- smallish neighborhoods, they'd calm down. And they did.

AA: Mmm,hmm.

GL: And, uh, I worried all during the summer what it was going to be like when we came back in the fall, because the Vietnam situation had not really changed...

AA: Yeah.

GL: ...but they came back and I kept waiting all that semester for some sort of disturbance, but it never really happened. We had the few peaceful marches in town, uh, but the edge was gone.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: By that time, it was clear that they were going to end the Vietnam War, there wasn-, you know, or at least- and the draft had a great deal to do with this whole business.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: Um, you know, I'd never really been totally persuaded that all of the students, you know, that all of the students' objections to the Vietnam War was on a high idealistic plane. I think some of it was just the fear of being drafted. And it's a terrible, terrible situation because the young men who fought that Vietnam War were by large, out of blue-collar families, and blacks, you know...

AA: Mm,hmm.

GL: And students who, male students who were in college, were a kind of aristocracy. And it's been a long time for that resentment to die.

AA: Were there any, um, returning, er, I don't know if you remember, were there any returning Vietnam students that came...

GL: There were several.

AA: Did they- was there any problem between them and the rest of the student body?

GL: No, no, not really.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: I remember one young man in particular that had been a Marine in Vietnam, a parachute jumper, really. He was against the Vietnam War himself.

AA: Mm, hmm.

GL: He had had a terrible experience over there and he came back. No, ever- Grinnell students, when I look back on it, actually, given the circumstances, behaved extraordinarily well- they talked, you know...

AA: Yeah.

GL: (mumbles) The real difficulty with the situation was, it was almost impossible to get any, any kind of academic changes made because the Vietnam War was the chief, and in some respects, the only topic of conversation. And the attitude of academics toward the Vietnam War was almost diametrically opposed to that of the population in general, so it was a difficult job to be president or an academic officer at that time because you were getting it from both sides and trying to find a middle ground that was rational and reasonable was almost impossible.

AA: Uh, huh.

AA: Uh, ~~huh~~.

GL: Now, on top of that, you had the problem with large numbers of black students who were resentful for other reasons.

AA: Were there a lot of black students at Grinnell?

GL: Well, you see, when, uh, in the late sixties, with the best intentions in the world, Grinnell was under pressure to take more black students.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: And we did. We, you know, we've always had black students, most of them extraordinarily qualified people.

AA: Right.

GL: But then, all in one year, we went from say, twenty or twenty-five to a hundred and ten.

AA: What year was it, do you remember offhand?

GL: I'd say it was '69, maybe '70.

AA: '69...

GL: And we got a number of black students who really weren't qualified...

AA: Mmm.

GL: ...for the academic program, you know. And we didn't have any, any educational system to- preparation to bring them in properly. They'd- most of them had not had a very good high school education, you know, and they weren't prepared for the kind of academic rigor that Grinnell represents, it still does.

AA: Yeah. Did you, did you bring them in due to pressure from the students, or just-

GL: Ay, students and faculty, and uh, the institution itself, you know, it was um, we gave in to that temptation to do good.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: And we didn't think it out properly.

AA: You didn't anticipate that they wouldn't be-

GL: No, they were very- most of them were very unhappy.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: And, you know, we've- we whites, for the most part, thought, "Oh, boy, if we could get them in here, we'll bring them into the white society and they'll be happy and content and they'll be very grateful to us," and that wasn't the case at all, as you know.

AA: (Laughing) Right.

GL: And it's perfectly understandable why they felt that way.

AA: Yeah.

GL: ...you know. And on top of everything else, Grinnell is a very white community, historically, it's always been. It's right in the middle of Iowa.

AA: It still is.

GL: ...right in the middle of the cornfield. And most of the blacks that we got were accustomed to living in metropolitan areas. They came here, and a black student looks around, and he doesn't see anything except for white faces. Naturally, he's upset.

AA: Mm, hmm.

GL: Uh, I think, you know, within a matter of two or three years, why, we'd revised the situation enough so that we'd, you know, we took qualified blacks, and there are a lot of 'em out there...

AA: Mmm.

GL: And I think now that the situation is oh, chan-, I suspect it's



AA: Really.

GL: There are always problems with students of a different color, you know, even, you know, the international students. I assume that-

AA: Were there a lot of international students...?

GL: Not so many in those days, as there are, no.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: Um, you know, we wanted to have a multi-cultural atmosphere that would be attractive to students of all colors.

AA: Now, that was even, that was back-

GL: Way back then.

AA: Way back then, that's good.

GL: And that's a very honorable intention.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: And you ha-, you, if you are going to be realistic, you have to work it out. But it took a kind of strategy, and intelligence and sensitivity that we didn't have in those days. I mean, it just never occurred to us.

AA: Mmm, hmmm.

GL: We had to learn it the hard way. Now, maybe they've learned it now.

AA: Yeah, it's gone, it's gone pretty well. Do you remember any specific problems with international students that, maybe that...?

GL: Not the international students, I remember specific problems with black students because they occupied the library.

AA: They, oh, they did?

GL: Yeah.

AA: When was that?

GL: Seventy-one.

AA: What- they just took over the library...?

GL: It was a Sunday. They, they occupied the library.

AA: Oh, my.

GL: And, um, you know, they left and so forth. We talked to them. I thought, there was another instance I thought, "Well, maybe it's time to call the police."

AA: Mmm, hmmm.

GL: Take the-

AA: How many of them were there, do you remember? I mean, twenty, fifty...?

GL: I'd say forty or fifty.

AA: Forty...

GL: All of them.

AA: Oh, wow.

GL: It's peer group pressure there, too, well, when- (unintelligible mutterings) you know...

AA: Oh, yeah.

GL: ...they didn't do any damage. I mean, they- and we talked to them. And they had some radical leadership at that particular time. And it was a difficult situation, but they- they left without doing any damage. I thought for a moment, you know, of calling the police and having them taken out, but I thought, "Well, what are we going to accomplish, we aren't really going to, you know, ease up the resentment and so forth, we aren't really going

to solve any problems. All we're going to do is get them out of the library and they're not really doing any damage. And if we talk to them, you know, maybe we'll learn something, maybe they'll learn something."

AA: Mmm, hmm.

GL: That was a two- or three-year process. And I think we all, we all, we all felt, all we white people felt, that they'd be, the blacks would be so grateful about being admitted into white society that they'd thank us, as I told you before. And of course, as you look back on it, that was a ridiculous supposition.

AA: Yeah..

GL: You know..

AA: Yeah, it really, yeah-

GL: Oh, oh, I don't, I have the feeling, in looking at the campus, and I don't see it as closely as I used to, that it's- that the situation is basically healthy. You can't put twelve hundred young people together without having, you know, some problems.

AA: Mmm, hmm.

GL: Now all during this Vietnam thing, of course, there was the drug business.

AA: Wait, one more question about the Vietnam thing.

GL: All right.

AA: The year you canceled commencement, were the students of the senior class, were they angry or were their parents angry at all?

GL: Some of their parents were terribly angry, and, of course, the alumni were outraged. Now, I'm generalizing, you know. Not all of them, not all the parents, because I had a lot of supporting letters. But basically, yes, the alumni and parents were outraged.

AA: And did you, how did you appease them, or did you?

GL: Didn't.

AA: (Laughs) Oh, no.

GL: The- I mean, we did the best we could. But it was several years and a lot of alumni meetings and meetings of parents before things started to ease up. There wasn't any other way out of it, you know.

AA: Mm, hmm.

GL: Um, it's a tough, it was a tough time to be a college president...

AA: Yeah.

GL: ...trying to find a middle, intelligent ground, you know...

AA: Right.

GL: You couldn't ever, you couldn't go forward as fast as you wanted, and you couldn't back up. You had to keep that lid on. The important thing, you know, was to make the college survive, because I think those of us who'd been through, you know, had reached a certain age, knew that it would pass.

AA: Mmm, hmm.

GL: And if we could just sort of keep our heads and patience for a couple of years, things would be all right. But in the meantime...

AA: How old were you, doing this?

GL: I came to Grinnell when I was, uh, let's see, sixty-five, I was forty-six or -seven years old.

AA: Mmm,hmm.

GL: Um, the thing was personally complicated for me by the fact that my wife and the mother of my children and my childhood sweetheart (Amy laughs, not realizing where this is going) uh, we'd been married almost thirty years, died of a cancer, a lingering illness...

AA: Oh, wow.

GL: ...while all this was going on.

AA: Oh, my.

GL: And this- and she was at the University of Iowa hospitals for much of that, and I had- I went over there every day and the, you know, the personal and professional strains, I suppose, wore me down a good deal.

AA: Oh...

GL: But we, we went ahead and when- when she died, I had a grant then from the Danford Foundation for a leave of absence and I took my younger daughter, the others were either married or in college at that time, around the world, starting in Rio de Janiero and going to Kenya, where my oldest girl was married to a political scientist: an expert on African rural economics was living at the time. Her husband was teaching at the University of Nairobi. And then we kept right on going to Australia, New Zealand, and around. It took three months. And that refreshed me a bit.

AA: Oh, wow.

GL: The daughter I traveled with was a fourteen-year old, that's a special experience, I can assure you.

AA: Uh,huh, that sounds-

GL: But we really had a good time and that helped a lot. That, we did that in the end of seventy-one and the first part of seventy-two.

AA: Hmmmm.

GL: And, by that time, Waldo Walker was the Dean. And Dean Wall had retired as the Dean and gone back to the Department of History. Uh, I think, do you know him, you know who he is, he's the professor of history.

AA: Yeah, I haven't had any history courses.

GL: Yeah, yeah, well, he's, you know, a great scholar.

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: In American history, particularly, constitutional history. And Walker had been a professor of biology and he became the Dean and eventually, after I left, he became the Executive Vice President. And just now, he sort of left that position and is running computers at the Physical Plant and some of those other things. Well, he managed the show in those three months when I was gone and he had some of the same kind of problems that I did, but things were easing up by that time. Now, while all this was going on, the college, which had a good endowment compared with other colleges, [the endowment] was still not very significant. And chairman of the Board of Trustees when I came, was a man named Ted Huett, who- it was customary in those days for the chairman of the Board of Trustees to serve two two-year terms: four years.

AA: Mmm,hmm.

GL: And when Mr. Huett gave up the chairmanship, Robert Noyce became chairman for four years. Now Noyce at that- when he went on



the Board, he was a graduate of the college, and a Ph.D. out of MIT in physics, one of Grant Gale's students, was a vice president of the Semiconductor Division at Fairchild-Cameron. And he wanted to start his own company because he had perfected the chip, computer chip.

AA: Mmmmm.

GL: And two of the trustees, Sam Rosenthal and Joe Rosenfield, were so taken with his plans, that each of them invested money in the Intell Corporation as it was getting started. They gave the money to the college and then the college gave the money back to Noyce.

AA: Oh.

GL: It was \$300,000 total.

AA: Oh, wow.

GL: Noyce started the company and then went public. And the \$300,000 became, was worth, \$2,500,000 as stock. But the trustees decided not to sell it, but to keep it in hopes that the stock would rise in value.

AA: Mmm, hmmm.

GL: Well, it did. It went up spectacularly and the endowment of the college now, which is considerable, as you know, what is it, \$350 million, it depends on who's counting it, I suppose.

AA: (laughs) Yeah, I suppose.

GL: All of that has come about because of the investment in Intell.

AA: Mmm.

GL: Now, not directly, but indirectly, because we also had on the board at that time one of these super-moneymen. Anyhow, he still is, I think: Warren Buffett. And as they sold the stock in Intell, in small allotments, two- and three-thousand shares at a time, so as not to frighten anybody, they gave the money to Buffett to reinvest. One of the things Warren Buffett did was to buy the Dayton TV station just before it became a national NBC station.

AA: Hmmm.

GL: For \$13 million, and it was sold a few years later for \$50 million. Well, now, you don't have to do that very many times to bring the endowment up.

AA: Yeah.

GL: And there were other spectacular investments and so, when we started with, what, maybe a \$15 or \$16 million endowment, by the time I left, it was maybe \$75 million and a few years later, now, it's up around \$350 million. And the college is financially impregnable, I guess that's the word, although there's never enough money to go around, of course. The more you have, the more you've got to have. So that was one of the good things that came out of those years, but I could see that by 1973, and in the meantime, I was just worn out, I was tired. You know, it gets that way. If you're college president of Grinnell, you're working all day Saturday and Sunday as well as during the week.

AA: Mm, hmmm.

GL: And (pause) I married the widow of Professor of Choral Music, Don Jones, who had died of cancer of the liver in 1969, a young man who had two children. He became quite sick in the spring and they couldn't understand why, and then they had an exploratory operation and they discovered he had cancer of the liver and it was incurable. ~~And he was dead in three or four months.~~



incurable. And he was dead in three or four months.

AA: Hmm.

GL: That was in 1969, while I was, of course, president of the college and concerned with this anti-Vietnam long-term demonstration. And, in 1973, after I had been widowed, his widow and I were married and her two children were younger than mine, but not by much, and came to live in the president's house with my youngest daughter.

AA: Hmm.

GL: And they hit it off right away. And Russ, my wife, had been a faculty wife for twenty years before that, and both she and I were sort of worn out with the college at that time and it was probably worn out with at least me, and so I thought that would be a good time, ten years, it's sufficient...

AA: Right.

GL: ...to resign. And I wanted to do something, I'd say I was 56 or 57, too- too old to get another job as a college president, which I didn't want to do anyway, but too young to retire. So I had the chance to go to Deere and Company, in Moline, as a Vice-President of Corporate Communications. And I did. And I had a marvelous time there.

AA: Well, that's good.

GL: And I worked out of that marvelous headquarters building in Moline, which had been built by (mumbles) in a spectacular setting. And I-

AA: Now what kind of corporation was this again?

GL: This was the Deere and Company, they're farm equipment...

AA: Oh, John- oh, right...

GL: You've seen John Deere tractors...

AA: Yes, yes.

GL: Nothing runs like a Deere.

AA: Right.

GL: Well, that's it. And I worked there five years and by that time, my health had started to go. I had like a cancer of the bladder, I had kidney stones, I'd had a- one of my trips I came down with a severe stomachache and I put it off doing anything about it for a couple of days, thinking I had the flu or something, by the time my wife got me to the hospital, I had a busted appendix.

AA: Oh..

GL: And it was in Reno, Nevada, of all places, visiting a daughter. But Reno turns out to be a great medical center, you know, it's full of surgeons and doctors because the tax laws... (laughs, Amy joins him) So I had awfully good treatment and I survived that. But if your appendix busts, you're a matter of three or four months getting back on your feet. Well, it was just, and I'd had these kidney stones and this bladder cancer which was not that significant, in the sense that it was not life-threatening as long as I went through a lot of little biopsies and got them burned out. It's something like a skin cancer on your bladder. So I decided, there were a lot of things I wanted to do before I died, and I thought, "Well, why don't I just retire." And I retired and I came back to Grinnell as President Emeritus. (Laughs) And I started to get healthy again.

AA: Oh...

GL: And I've been here, you see, I came back here in 1980 and here it is thirteen years later and I'm 75 years old and I'm still doing all the things I did before, not with the same speed and gusto, you know, but I...

AA: Uh, huh.

GL: I hunt pheasants and quail in the fall and I fish troutstreams in Montana and Utah and Colorado in the summer and early fall and I fish farm ponds around Grinnell in the spring. And I still keep-I've got a couple books that are still going on, and I write little essays. And I'm very interested in environmental concerns. I'm a charter member of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation and I write for that magazine and I write for what you would call sports magazines: fly fishing magazines and so forth. And by now, I have twelve and a half grandchildren.

AA: Oh, my goodness. Twelve and a half?

GL: Twelve and a half. One is due in October.

AA: Oh. Do you spend a lot of time with your grandchildren?

GL: Well, yes and no. That is, we have one daughter living in Iowa City, who's married to a young lawyer and she has two plus the half, and so we see her quite a bit. But my other daughters all live west. I have one in Colorado, with three children, who works for Huelett-Packard, I have another in Alco, Nevada, whose husband is a exploration geologist, I have another one in Berkeley whose husband is a professor of political science there and I have another in Long Beach, California, who is a registered nurse. And we see them every year. They take turns coming back for Christmas and we always go out there in the fall to check them in, but, so the answer to your question is yes, we do see them, but not as neighbors so much...

AA: Right. Why did you come back to Grinnell?

GL: I liked the small town.

AA: You liked the small town?

GL: And I like the college. You know, when I left Grinnell, the trustees hired Richard Turner as President, and I thought probably it was just as well that I was in another town while he was here. I didn't know him very well, and he was here only three years. And then George Drake took the job. Now George had been a trustee whom I had recommended as a trustee for the Board. So that George was also a Grinnell graduate and had taught here earlier...

[Tape side ran out]