

^DeLong, Kate
interviewed by Malia Oliver
transcribed by Malia Oliver

Malia Oliver: Its May fourth, 1993, and we're in the home of Kate DeLong and here we go. Okay, how about we start by just stating your name and where you were born.

Kate DeLong: Should I pick that up?

MO: No, you can leave it right there.

KD: Oh!.. I was born in DesMoines inum...it will be eighty four years ago May 13th, which is coming up, in 1909. And I came here because my father had come here... I guess...and I didn't... I didn't go to my mother's school which is.. she was sorry about....and my brother was here in school and I met Chuck here in school. And we graduated in 1931, the height of the depression. And there were no jobs available for the boys. Of course girls didn't...not many girls, unless they were going to teach, looked for jobs then. And we couldn't afford to get married for four years. Never dreamed we'd ever live in Grinnell. And we came here to live, Chuck was working at that..(???)..selling for them. And then he began to go out on his own, get into business for himself.

MO: How.. how did he start? You were part of the DeLong Factory Outlet?

KD: That was my husband's factory. Yes.

MO: How did he start that?

KD: He sold that about twenty eight years ago or so.

MO: How did he get that started?

KD: In the basement of our house.

MO: Oh wow!

KD: We lived in.. where the Munyons live, over on eighth avenue and... That was the way he really did get started. He, um no, we had lived over in ... in Indiana and he was selling in Indiana, Ohio, Kentucky and Michigan. And he just decided that he wanted to be on his own. He'd better start something on his own. So he began making jackets over there and then selling them. And then Mr. Lamb wanted him to come here saying he thought maybe he'd start making jackets but um, Chuck just kept on making them in our basement and, when he was off the road, of course. And um, then, it became a very good business and then twenty eight years ago he sold it to Sharpe. Course Sharp is ah...has ah...put in on all those things. Everything is on what now?

MO: I don't know.

KD: Computers.

MO: Oh yeah.

KD: He has computerized everything. And it's a very big business in Grinnell.

MO: Was it when the depression...the depression ended that he started this business? Or was it during the depression?

KD: It was after the depression. Well, it... the depression didn't end for years. But ah...we started it in ah, thirty five, thirty six. And ah we moved here in forty. We came here in forty. And ah lived ?????? for twenty two years and had four children and they grew up in that house, and then we moved out here and built this house.

MO: You told me (pause) Could you tell me more about your childhood? You said you had one brother.....

KD: My brother, who was here in school, yeah. He eh.....he was two years ahead of me, and he was captain of the basketball team and he was a nationally ranked tennis player. He....when he was sixteen years old he was....he was a second ranking junior in the country... and so he played lots of tennis in the east... lots of tournaments. And then he came here to school and then he took his law at Harvard. He went to DesMoines and practiced.

MO: What was the school like when you went to Grinnell?

KD: Well, it was much.....it was smaller, of course, a little bit and um.....i liked it. I liked it very much. Especially after I met Chuck...(laugh) and um. No I always liked it and I have some dear friends too that are (pause). When we came back to Grinnell, to live, in forty, it was nice because some of our college friends had done the same thing and um decided to stay in Grinnell (pause).

MO: Were the students divided between North and South Campus?

KD: I beg your pardon.

MO: Were the women living on south campus and the men on North?

KD: Yes yes. They were divided, yah. Oh Yes! No..no mixing. (laugh)

MO: Which buildings weren't...weren't there that are there now?

KD: Um....Loose. Lets see. We had Haines. And I lived in Main the first year. And Cottage four, which I forget the name of that one. I don't (pause)

MO: Read?

KD: Its the other side of Loose...just south of loose. No. South of Loose is what we used to call cottage five and then next to it is cottage four. I lived there a couple years. I was house chairman my last year. And um and um (pause) Well, there are some nice things

about Grinnell. Good school. Nice school.

MO: What made you come here from DesMoines?

KD: Why?

MO: Yeah. Close to home?

KD: Well. My father had gone here and my brother was here in school, i suppose. And an uncle had come here. Older brother...and a younger....another brother was coming and was drowned that summer in the DesMoines River. And Chuck had lots and lots of relatives here too in school as years past.

MO: Did your boys come here too to school?

KD: One of them did. David. Yes. And Chad went to Carleton. Dave had one year at Carleton and he came here for three years. And then Annie went to Lawrence. And Timmy went to Cornell.

MO: Four?

KD: Four.

MO: How old are they now and where do they live?

KD: Oh! Chad is 57. He's a psychiatrist. He's a psychoanalyst out

in Paloalto, California. And um Dave is in business down in Gainesville, Florida. And um Tim works for IBM in DesMoines. And Annie lives up in um, in Saint Paul, in North Oaks. And her husband is head of the department of Microbiology at the University. In fact his picture was in the New York Times just on March 31. Yah. He's um done a lot of work with Aids.

MO: What was your life like during the war times? Were you here?

KD: Yah. Well, I raised my ... we raised our kids on eating either steak or hamburger. Mostly hamburger. And um gasoline was rationed. But um, we did.. we were really unconscious of what was going on in a certain sense. Of course all of us should have been....should have been aware of the holocaust. You know I always feel that um too many people knew that and um we should have known. Horrible thing. Yah.

MO: None of your friends or family were in the service?

KD: I beg your pardon.

MO: None of your friends of family were in the service?

KD: Um. All of my sons were in the service. Chad was in the Navy. Dave was in the Navy. And Tim was the only one that was drafted. He was drafted the year he...He graduated from Cornell in 69, and was drafted within weeks and he was sent...Fortunately he was sent to

um Greece with the Nato forces. And Dave was on a destroyer escort down in the um.... off Cuba. And was in the bay of pigs. Which was kind of....it was frightening for us. And Chad was um, at the marine base at Camp Penelton. Most of the time. I remember one horrible thing we....somebody told us. We were looking at a group of... Chuck and I were out there. We were looking at a platoon of soldiers marching by. And um some officer said, "They're being shipped out tonight. Tommorrow half of them will be dead." He said, "They're the bottom of the barrell." Just an awful thing to say. Probably the poorest of the poor, you know.

MO: That was during World War II? Or was that.....

KD: Yes. That was in...that was in Vietnam.

MO: Vietnam?

KD: Yeah. World War II, no. They were too young for World War II. They were um. They were all under... Well they were little kids. They were all under ten years old. Yeah. But this was in the fifties and uh, late fifties, mostly in the sixties. It began. Korea. Horrible things.

MO: Where did your brother go to after he graduated from Grinnell?

KD: What?

MO: Where did your brother go to after he graduated from Grinnell?

KD: He went to Harvard Law School. He practiced law in DesMoines.
Very good Lawyer.

MO: Does he have children too?

KD: Yes. Two of them in DesMoines. They didn't come here to school.

MO: How about grandchildren? Do you have any of those?

KD: Yes! I have a whole lot of grandchildren. Chad has two children. Chad. They're.... Lisa, who is in interior decorating work in Paloalto, and Jimmy who has a... oh they're both out of college of course.... Jimmy is a...well after he got out of San Diego. He went to San Diego State. And um he went to Colorado and worked in a ski shop on repair and sales and next...this summer, Jimmy is going down to the south pacific to surf for six weeks.

MO: Oh wow.

KD: And then when he comes back in August he's going to... he's got a couple of backers and he's opening a big ski rental shop and repair and sales in Beaver Creek. So, he had thought he was going on in Graduate school but I think that this is.... this is developing into something he'll enjoy.

MO: Sounds great.

KD: Oh he is. He's just...well he's always getting things done. Natural. Then lets see the next is Dave. Dave has two daughters. They're in...live in Boston. And he has a son, Michael, who is eleven years old and lives down in Florida. Then Anne. Anne has three children. Bethy, the oldest one, our oldest grandchild, just graduated from. Well, on the eighteenth of May she graduates from Yale Medical School.

MO: Wow

KD: And she has a husband.. darling husband.. and he is involved in ...not as an architect but he writes about buildings all over the world. He is a... and next year they'll both be at Columbia. And they have a baby. And the baby was born in Janu...the first week of February. And when the baby was about five days old, maybe ten days old, Bethy and Andie were walking in New Haven with the baby and Bethy broke her ankle on a curb. She tripped and fell and broke her ankle. So um, its amazing to me how they handle all this. And then our Timmy. Oh then uh lets see. Thats their oldest child, Anne and Ashes, and um then there is Stephy. Stephanie. She was married in January. She teaches school in Sebastiapul, north of San Fransisco, you know. An hour and a half or so. And teaches fourth grade I think. She has just married a young dentist out there. They're both about 26 years old. And they just bought a house out in the valley. They're delighted with everything. And then

Annie's third child, Annie and Ash's third child, is a junior at the University of Wisconsin. And um I don't know what he's going to do. (laughs) That's it. Then Timmy in Des Moines. He.. They have two children. They're um six and eight and they're...Well, they're just darling kids. That's all.

MO: Yeah.

KD: And that's uh. Those are our grandchildren. And the one great grandchild. The great grandchild is named Renee, after an architect in Scotland that Annie knew. And her middle name is Savannah simply because they love Savannah.

MO: That's pretty.

KD: Renee Savannah Myers. She's our only great grandchild.

MO: Did any of your grandchildren go to Grinnell?

KD: NO (laughs)

MO: How about your childhood? Could you tell me about your parents and what they did?

KD: Well. My mother was a very bright woman. She was born in Iowa City. And Mrs John Parish, Dr. Parish's wife, who is my dearest friend.. Her mother and my mother lived in the same block in Iowa

City. And both of them I think were born in 1875. That's Mrs Parish, who lives down at the Mayflower home. And when my mother was nine her father moved. Took his business to Des Moines because the state capital was being moved from Iowa City to Des Moines. And she grew up in Des Moines. And when she was fifteen she went to Vassar. Graduated when she was nineteen. And um I kind of think of her as one of the early volunteer career people. She was President of the YWCA in Des Moines I think for thirteen years and she helped the ???? I think establish the civic music association and she was its first president. She was president of the ??????, the parliamentary law club, organized...help organize the proteus club, the fortnightly musical club, all kinds of things. I never could have kept up with her. (laughs) And my dad went here to school. And uh ...its kind of interesting to me that he went to Harvard Medical School just for the fall of one year. He had never had any sciences. So he was completely unequipped. But at least he was there. His older brother.... I think the reason he was there was his older brother George, who had gone here to school, was teaching Chemistry at Harvard. And lets see um Well, I grew up in Des Moines.

MO: What was your father doing?

KD: He was in the real estate business. And um his mother was a remarkable woman. She uh, Mary Jane Cogshel. She uh.. His mother was working for equal suffrage in the eighties, or in the eighties and nineties particularly. And the first ten years of this

century. And Carrie Chapman Patt called her the Mother of Equal Suffrage in Iowa and her greatest inspiration. And my father grew up with Susan B. Anthony and Reba Katie Stann and Carrie Chapman Patt at his house, you know.

MO: Wow

KD: And um I suspect he was overpowered (laughs) by all these women.

MO: I'll bet.

KD: And um

MO: What was your school like as a child?

KD: What was it like?

MO: Was it a small school?

KD: I went to a public school in Des Moines. Bird School. Close to our home. And then I went to Roosevelt. I went to West Des Moines Highschool for a couple of years. And I went to Roosevelt Highschool for two years. And uh then my mother.... My mother felt that the school system wasn't doing me an adequate job. So she took me, and a friend of mine also did it with me, out of school and we were tutored by people who taught at Drake for a year. And

then the next year, which had been my fifth year in highschool, we went to the Madeira school down in Washington D.C. Then I came here.

MO: What was your reason for going to Washington D.C.?

KD: Well, Ms. Madeira, the headmistress of this school, prep school, was one of my mother's good friends at Vassar. And I think thats probably why I went there. Though they took me to other schools in the east to look them over, you know. The way they used to do?

MO: What was your reason for your husband and you returning to Iowa after living in Indiana?

KD: Well. His territory was over there. He had four states to travel to sell gloves for Mr. Lamb. And you know you just took a job wherever you could get it in those days. And he was an awful good salesman. There are others, two or three others, Dick Seland who lives here is in the baseball end of that business and, well theres lots of people around here who are.

MO: How long did you live in Indiana?

KD: Well. We were married in 35. And in forty we came here. The first two months we lived here, on summer street, on the corner of tenth and summer, on the south east corner. And then this house

down on eighth avenue, 1516 eighth avenue, was for sale and we bought that. But we lived in.....Harry and Grant Gale lived next to us on summer street. You know Grant? Grant is retired but he....

MO: Physics professor?

KD: Physics Department, yeah. And we lived next door to them. Grant, when i was here in School, Chuck and I were here in school... Grant was sort of a glammour boy, you know. He wore ah... saddle shoes, black and white saddle shoes. I think he had a roadster. I'm not sure. I can't remember. But, no, all the kids liked Grant.

MO: He was a professor then?

KD: Yeah.

MO: Oh wow.

KD: Yeah. Uh-huh. I don't think there are very many living around here. Course there aren't any teaching.

MO: Are there any intersesting stories you can think of that would add to this tape just out of the blue?

KD: If you ask me questions I do better.

MO: Okay. I heard that there was a really big storm or a really hard winter one year in Grinnell? Did that affect you?

KD: Well there was one. A storm in....You're not speaking of a tornado that hit Grinnell in 1887? Something like that?

(laugh)

MO: No. It was a little later than that.

KD: Yes there was. Lets see. When was that.

MO: I heard it was really damaging to a lot of the crops and the town suffered a lot.

KD: Well. I remember. I remember it mostly because ofIt was the fall, the first fall we lived here, and we were living in that house up on Tenth and Summer for a couple months. And in November I remember... November...When is Armistice day? November fourteenth?

MO: Which day?

KD: Armistice day.

MO: I don't know.

KD: I think it was. And we had a big party planned. And of course that was called off. That was the storm I think you're talking of.

MO: I think it was.

KD: A tremendous storm. Yeah. But I remember it mostly because....in terms of what I couldn't do.

MO: What couldn't you do?

KD: Well I had planned to go to DesMoines that day, I remember. And, you know, I wasn't.....People that it really did harm... It didn't harm me personally. But I know it was a very heavy heavy storm.

MO: Did you have to cancel your party?

KD: Oh yes. Oh yes.

MO: Did it continue through that winter? Was it a hard winter.. following?

KD: Oh. Things like that were never... You know, if it was a hard winter or not....it wouldn't have made much difference to me. Either way, things were always... I've always thought things were... You know things were... I enjoyed everything that came along.

MO: Great. What age did most of your children leave home?

KD: Well they all left um.... Timmy was drafted of course. He was out of.... the youngest one.

MO: Out of college?

KD: Yeah. In 69. And Dave enlisted in the Navy after he.... He graduated here in 58. And then a couple of years later he went to Northwestern for a semester or so. I suppose he was taking some business or something. I don't really know. Then he enlisted in the Navy. And was down in the Caribbean. They were having so much trouble with Castro, you know. So thats where he was. And Chad was out at the Marine base at ??????. Thats the three boys.

MO: How has the town of Grinnell changed since you've been here?

KD: Well. I don't suppose we were really aware of...even though I, as little girl, I had come down here with my father to his commencements and things like that, you know, and some names were familiar to me. It wasn't like going to a strange place for me. But really. We were aware of Candyland, where Cunningham Drug store is. And there was an icecream sundae dish called Candland that was just vanilla or chocalate icecream with chocalate and nuts on it, peanuts on it, you know. And everyone had candylands. Would you like a coke? I poured one for you. Would you like one?

MO: sure.

KD: I forgot to bring it out.

(leaves and returns) Well, we were all very aware of Candyland. It was quite a meeting place. It had some booths where you could have a sandwich. And there was a house across from ARH where a woman by the name of Mrs. Macalester served breakfast and she had marvelous cinnamon roles that were about so high. And we'd go over there between classes or if we didn't have a class, and had our breakfast. I don't think I ever ate my breakfast at the quad. And we picniced out at Westfield and Jones Grove.

MO: Who is we?

KD: Oh boys and girls would go out there. And we didn't have cars. But how we got out there was on a car. i can't remember quite how. And my senior year I stayed out, Chuck and I stayed out at Westfield all night one night and that was the night before graduation. There were lots of what were called blanket parties in those days. Don't know what they're called nowadays. And so we were aware of Westfield and Jones Grove, and what else. We knew some of the doctors in town because ocassionally we had to.... I had to have my head sewn up once.

MO: What did you do?

KD: Well, we were... It was my freshman year and we were playing

bridge in the central in one of ... in Loose. And I tipped over backward in the chair and hit my head on the radiator. And um so we knew Dr. Parish, John's father, John Parish's father. And Dr. Summers lived here in Grinnell. He was an old college friend of my father's, and Mrs. Summers. And the Spalding boys were his friends. And Harry Byers was one of his friends. He had lots of friends around here who he used to speak of.

MO: What is Westfield? You keep mentioning that. I don't know where that is.

KD: Well its a little community out...well it isnt really a community. You know where the Reinsurance building is, south of town?

MO: I don't think so.

KD: Well you go out to the reinsurance building and turn west. And the first road north leads to a little church, called the Westfield Church. And it borders the highway 80. And people picniced out there. It was nice hilly country. And of course we went to some of the stores in town so we knew... I don't mean that we bought a lot of things. But we just knew....after all there were reasons why you had to go to a store once in a while. And the Library and the Post Office and the old Congregational Church where our graduation was held. It was an old pretty grey stone building. Much prettier, I think, than the one we have now. And...

MO: How large was your graduating class?

KD: How large?

MO: Yeah.

KD: It was about 280, 290. I think only two boys had jobs. One worked for his father in the bank and the other one got aI don't remember what the other one did. Its just there weren't any jobs.

MO: Wow

KD: I can remember when I went home before...between the time when I graduated and when Chuck and I were married. We lived. Our house ran down to the railroad tracks, our yard did. And to the Raccoon River. And we used to see... from our porches we saw little pockets. At night we could see bonfires where men were living. For several years they were there. My father used to take sacks of potatoes and lots of reading material. They were a bright, nice, intellegent bunch of men who were having to live that way. Then W??? came along, and contibutions, and camps. Fourseas they were called. That picked up a lot of young people. But those were really desperate times.

MO: You were still a student when the depression started?

KD: I was here in school from 27 to 31. And yes Iowa had been very affluent up until... at least all I knew of it...until 29 maybe. Suddenly all this happened. I wasn't very much aware of the business world.

MO: How did it effect the campus?

KD: Well. I think board, room and tuition was something like 700 dollars in a year. As opposed to what? 19 something?

MO: Yeah.

KD: And people worked at the dining hall or they got jobs at the big building.

MO: There was always food in the dining hall?

KD: Yeah. Most of the boys, some girls too, but most of the boys, Chuck didn't, but... had jobs in the bakery or doing the.... It was very hard for lots of people.

MO: What did most people do after they'd graduated and they had no jobs? Did they stick around?

KD: Well they took jobs just wherever they could get them. Chuck... Chuck worked in the steel mills. He came from Gary, Indiana. And he got a job with the steel mills. His father was a doctor. And he

could have stayed on. When he left the steel mills they had asked him to stay on. But he didn't want to. And he sold magazines. All over Iowa and Illinois with a magazine crew. You just did what you could do. Oh I had a job too. I forgot about that. I got a job in the banking department because I knew the superindendent of banking. But did I have anything to offer them!! (laughs) And then I worked at Younkers for a year. I guess my father was terribly hit by the depression. I don't know if thats necessarily why I did that but I wanted to do it. And ?? Parish worked for her father's abstract business in Independence, where she came from. And my roommate here taught school. And I remember hearing once that ninety dollars a month was the top salary. Yes! I worked at Younkers, I remember, for nineteen cents an hour.

MO: Oh my goodness!!

KD: Yeah. I wasn't going to go without food or anything but thats just the way things were. Yeah. Some people, many many people, were in diar circumstances i know. Lots of them. It was a good leveller i inmagine if such a thing has any value at all.

MO: When you came back to Grinnell and were leaving here as a towns' person rather than as a student, how was the relationship between the town and the school?

KD: Well at first you're kind of excitied about getting back to your old school, you know. But that wears off pretty fast, you

know. You're interested in your friends... and your friends and children, you know, are.....I always let.... And at that time we knew faculty members, which was nice. Now, I know a few of the younger ones and they're just darlings but they're children are young, and they have other interests and so do I. Chuck and I, we never had...we always lived well and simply and we had lots of nice trips and our kids did what they wanted to do andyeah.

MO: Can you tell me more about those nice trips? Where did you go?

KD: Well, we used to go to Puerto Rico every winter.

MO: Oh wow

KD: And one of Chuck's roommates had a leather tanning business in Tennessee. And like a lot of people, they go to some country like Puerto Rico or Mexico or someplace you know where wages aren't so.... That's really the reason people do it, I think. Might as well face it. And he had a tanning factory down in um.... And so we went down with them. They spent quite a bit of time down there. We went down there eleven years in a row. Of course we couldn't be down there very long cause i never wanted to leave the kids. And then we went... Oh. We took trips. We did lots of things. But then after the kids were gone we went on a trip to Australia, and Bangkok, Japan, China, not Shanghai but Hongkong, Honolulu. We had a lot of good trips. Annie was in London and we went over to see her. And when our Timmy was in Greece we went over to see him too.

WE went to Euripe, Italy, France. We've had some nice trips. Alaska. And around this country too.

MO: Did you fly to all of these places?

KD: Yeah. I like to fly. Its a long trip to get there.

MO: Yeah I know. I understand that well.

KD: Yes.

MO: Do your children come back here to visit you often?

KD: They're awfully busy now. Although Annie, our daughter, was down here last week. She's been racing from one end of the country to... from San Fransisco, California. She's gald tostay home now for a few months. We've always had a family reunion. This year we're going to skip it. We especially like going down to New Jersey....coast. But our oldest son called a few days ago and he said he was going up to Alaska the first..... He hunts up in Alaska. And he has several other trips he's planned this summer. And Dave down in Gainesville said that they didn't want to.... to go there. He did last year but they didn't..... for various reasons. They're awfully busy too. And Timmy.... Timmy's... lets see. He likes to take his children to the ocean. They love to play in the sand. They're younger. And Annie. They're all.... The grandchildren are just everywhere, you know. We can't make

plans the way we used to. Although next winter I think we're going to either go down somewhere near florida, all of us, or else out to Colorado for skiing. We've got to find places where theres skiing, tennis and water. (laughs) Yeah. But I talk on the phone all of the time. The phone is marvelous.

MO: What are some of the modern day appliances that they have now that you didn't have when you were younger?

KD: Well. We had quite a bit. It seems to me I got a dishwasher in about.... lets see, we bought our house in forty... well very shortly after that. It was a dishwasher. I forget the name. It was made over in Indiana. That everybody bought. And the modern washer/dryer was a great thing that came along. For the first few years though I used to go down to the basement of that house and wash. I had somebody help me so it wasn't really. I was never bothered. It wasn't a burden when you're yuong and you're strong and you do anything and things were fine, you know. Yeah. And everybody else was doing the same thing. And I had to learn to cook. My mother never did any cooking. And I love to cook. Oh I shouldn't say that. (laughs) Up to a point. There were... We had all of the conveniences, it seems to me. Although right at first, when we were first married there were no..... i don't believe there were any washers or dryers the way we think of them now. They were old fashion washing machines and you ran them through a ringer to squeeze the water out of them. That kind of thing. Yeah. That..we.. that's what we had.

MO: Did you have those on campus too when you were a student?

KD: No. I sent my laundry out when I was on campus. I see kids now going to do laundry.....

MO: Carrying these big bags??

KD: Yeah yeah. No. Some lady came and picked up our laundry, took it home, brought it back.

MO: That's great.

KD: Yeah. Don't they do that now?

MO: I don't think so.

KD: Oh kids..... they learn how to do things. They've all learned at home, probably, to use.....many have learned how to use washers and dryers and all those things. My kids all know how to do it.

MO: When did you first get your first car?

KD: Well we had a car right away because of....well, chuck was travelling on the road. We only had one car. We had a business car. So when he was out on the road I had a bicycle. And I used to put... we didn't have Timmy at that time, but I used to put Annie in the basket and Chad and Dave in the back end of the cart. We

would go down town, pick up the groceries.... They delivered groceries also which was..... but I didn't think anything of putting all three kids on a bicycle when the car was gone. Then, about nineteen.... oh probably five or six years after we'd married, we had another car by that time. Because Chuck was gone six months. He was in and out for six months of the year and was home for six months. That's when he was busy with his... developing his jacket factory.