Editors Note:
We're kicking off ISU's 150 year anniversary off a week early. In this issue and next week's we will have extensive coverage from staff, emeritus, and alumni about the history of ISU. If you want to submit your own story, email indynews@hotmail.com
By Robert D. Sutherland, Professor of English Emeritus

CONTEXT

In preparing a feature on the history of Illinois State University, The Indy has asked people with firsthand knowledge to provide recollections of that portion of the history which they participated in or witnessed. I was on the English Department faculty from 1964 until my retirement in January 1992; and in my opinion, the twenty-year span from 1965 to 1985 saw some of the most rapid and significant changes, as well as some of the most turbulent upheavals, the institution has experienced.

There are a number of reasons for this. For the first hundred years since its founding in 1857, Illinois State Normal University had been a successful teacher's college, a State-supported institution whose mission was specifically to train Illinois teachers. Following 1957, however, it was caught up in the massive changes that were affecting all of American higher education. During the 1960's, a growing population of young people leaving high school, an increasingly complex economic environment that required a workforce with at least some college-level training, and a panicky perception that the Soviet Union was surpassing the United States in technological know-how (the USSR had launched two Sputnik satellites in 1957; the first man-made objects to orbit the earth), brought about a national commitment to higher education and a huge influx of government money into education generally—especially in math and science.

As a result of economic and population pressures and a national resolve to play Cold War catch-up with the Soviets, American higher education underwent an explosive expansion. ISU was part of this. When I came to ISU in 1964, it was still a smallish teacher's college with a student population of 5,600. In 1965, the population stood at 6,500. In 1964-66, ISNU ceased being solely a teacher's college and became a multi-purpose university, dropping 'Normal' from its name in the process. The growth continued rapidly until the university reached a fluctuating ceiling of a little more than 20,000 students, where it stands today.

The rapid expansion of ISU, and the change from the mindset of a teacher's college to that of a multipurpose university in the space of eight to ten years caused enormous stress and upheaval both on campus and in the sleepy little town of Normal, which was used to a fairly homogeneous population of education majors and had always been "dry" (no alcohol) until a hotly contested referendum brought beer to town in 1973.

As new departments, disciplines, and degree programs mushroomed on campus, new faculty, many of them young, were hired in from all over the United States to serve with older faculty members who had been preparing elementary and high school teachers since (perhaps) the 1940's. These older faculty members tended to be department heads and central administrators. As student population grew, large dormitories were built and new businesses catering to students entered the downtown.
NORMAL OPEN HOUSING MARCHES

Responding to Civil Rights legislation passed in the mid-60’s and answering calls for affirmative action, ISU in 1966 undertook a concerted effort to recruit African-American students, mainly from the Chicago area. Within two or three years, 700-800 African-American students were living in Normal, a town that had never had many black residents (the black people lived down the street in Bloomington). Normal had no barber who would cut their hair. Many white landlords did not want to rent rooms to African-Americans. In 1967, dissatisfied with this state of affairs, black students and their white allies in the town publicly agitated for enactment of a city-wide “Open Housing” ordinance which would prohibit discrimination in housing on the basis of race. Several large demonstrations took place, with long lines of chanting, sign-carrying marchers blocking traffic on North Street in downtown Normal, surrounding the Post Office, filling the intersections; and, after a bitterly fought campaign, a referendum did pass which led to the enactment of the “Open Housing” ordinance by the Normal Town Council.

RACIAL TENSION: MALCOLM X NAME ON STUDENT UNION

In 1965, Malcolm X, the influential and charismatic black nationalist leader, was assassinated, probably by hostile ele-

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ments within the Nation of Islam (Black Muslims). In 1969, following the murders of Black Panthers Fred Hampton and Mark Clark by Chicago Police in collision with the FBI, activist black leaders on the ISU campus lowered the American flag to half staff to commemorate them; President Braden ordered them to raise the flag or face a charge of criminal trespass. The flag was raised, but black students began agitating to re-name the Student Union building (then located on School Street in what is now the Media Services Building) as a memorial to Malcolm X. The University administration opposed this, as did the majority of students.

A number of demonstrations occurred. On one occasion, 200 black students occupied the Union coffee shop during the mid-morning. Coffee mugs and barricaded the glass doors from the inside to keep white students out. Angry whites filled the hallways outside. I and four others, including the woman who was then editor of the Vidette, linked arms and formed a line in front of the doors which prevented the angry crowd from ripping them open. And they thrown into the coffee shop which was filled with black men and women. I'm convinced that there would have been a riot. President Braden attempted to send the powder keg by coming to talk to the blacks. They referred to "Budgie is a racist" until he left. And then, to avoid a confrontation with police, they filed out by a rear door. Events such as this increased racial tensions on campus, which impacted the non-activist black students as well.

Borden's term as president (1967-75) followed the eleven-year term of Robert Borden, who, with bureaucratic savvy and an affable, gentle paternalism, had guided the school through the early years of its transition to multi-purpose institution. Borden and his wife Karin made a remarkable team; each fall both of them memorized names and salient personal facts about new faculty members and their spouses, and at receptions and other social functions could always recall details of what they'd learned.

After having not seen a person for a year or two. Mrs. Borden would be able to say, "Hello, Diane. Are you still knitting sweaters for your three grandchildren?"

Borden knew seniors by their first names; and at formal dances held in the Union ballroom, he and Karin would arrive to a warm welcome, dance in great sweeping circles about the floor, moving gracefully among the student couplers, nodding and smiling and greeting everyone; and, when they'd made the obligatory rounds, go waltzing right out the door. And of course the students were charmed.

CIVIL SERVICE STRIKE

In 1969, the university's unionized civil service workers (members of AFSCME, including janitors, groundskeepers, food service workers, cooks), having reached an impasse in contract negotiations with the University, went on strike. The work they would normally have done was not done, unless by supervisors forced to take up the slack. Classrooms, restrooms, hallways were filthy, trash collected in corners, and cigarette butts were everywhere underfoot. During the strike, some students—fulfilling what they conceived to be their civic duty—used to tidy the environment by picking up the litter and trash that collected on the lawn. Other students, attempting to support the striking workers, went about over-turning trashcans. Students and faculty sympathetic to the workers' demands were supportive by trying to pressure the University administration to negotiate in good faith.

The University, however, was more interested in playing hardball, and hired as consultants a Chicago firm which in the past had specialized in union-busting.

EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND
EDUCATIONAL REFORM AND EXPERIMENTATION

In the period 1968-71, another type of ferment on the ISU campus resulted from a University-wide effort to examine educational process, to explore the nature of learning and teaching, and to experiment with new models for instruction and the application of knowledge. It was an exciting time, and these efforts reflected a nationwide questioning of traditional models of education in grade schools, high schools, and colleges. Building on the progressive thinking of John Dewey and Alfred North Whitehead, influential books of such writers as Jerry Farber, Paul Goodman, Neil Postman, Jonathan Kozol, George Leonard, and Herbert Kohl challenged the basic assumptions and practices of one-way, top-down coercive education.

On ISU's campus, there was a period of open dialogue, with conferences and debates, where students and faculty participated in figuring out new ways of doing things. Again, some of the older faculty and those who were more traditional in their thinking, did not agree with these efforts or with the experiments some faculty members were conducting in their classrooms.

GAY LIBERATION FRONT: ALLEN Ginsberg

In March of 1970, the newly-formed Gay Liberation Front held its first dance in the ISU Solarium, on the top floor of Fairchild Hall. The GLF, now 37 years old, is currently known as PRIDE, and where it had originally been conceived as a gay, lesbian, and bisexual organization, its description now has been expanded to 'glbt&q', adding 'transgendered' and 'questioning'. Its name has changed over the years: from the Gay Liberation Front, to the Gay People's Alliance, to GACA, to PRIDE. But in 1970, the organization and its aims were "new and strange" to ISU's campus. This first dance was widely advertised. ISU football players threatened to come "bust it up". The remnants of the Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) sold tickets and promised to guard the door to keep the football players from causing trouble. ACLU sent an observer (me) to be a witness in case trouble did happen. The gay Beat poet Allen Ginsberg, who was in town to give a poetry reading at Illinois Wesleyan University, heard about the dance and came to Normal to attend it. It was an interesting event. The football players never showed up, so the SDS people joined the members of the GLF on the dance floor. There was a good band playing; rapid strobe lights were thudding on and off. Long chains of dancers snaked around the room, frozen in mid-motion by the flashing light. Allen Ginsberg, in daskiki

"Do they really call this town 'Ne - Allen Ginsberg
and heads, sat cross-legged on the floor, writing a poem by strobe light. When the dance was over, he needed a ride back to Wesleyan. Since I had a car, I gave him a lift. As we approached Bloomington, Ginsberg turned to me and said, “Do they really call this town “Normal”?” And I answered, “Yes they do.”

ANTI-VIETNAM WAR PROTESTS: THE PEACE MOVEMENT; GENERATIONAL DIVIDE

The U.S. war in Vietnam, greatly accel-
erated by President Lyndon Johnson in 1965, had long been a divisive force in American society. By 1968, opposition to the war, and the military draft which accompanied it, and to Johnson, and his Cabinet, and the Pentagon was resulting in mass demonstrations across the country—in the streets, on campuses, at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago. Students were accusing universities of complicity in the war effort because of ROTC on campuses, and academic think tanks and defense research programs. At some universities, such as Columbia in New York City, students were staging sit-ins and taking over buildings, disrupting classes, and damaging property. Nationwide, college campuses became centers of opposition to the war and the draft, to economic exploitation of workers and the poor, and authoritarian decision-making. A serious generational divide between those “under 30” and those “over 30” had developed, with mutual distrust and misunderstanding of each other's assumptions, convictions, and values. It was represented in my own case. I was 30 in 1967, and for a space of nearly ten years my parents and I weren't able to talk about these things in civil rights, educational reform, and the peace movement that were important to me. On my visits home to see them in Kansas, we could talk of nothing but relatives and the weather; and, returning to Normal, I had splitting headaches. I didn't think my parents ever totally understood me and what concerned me, and how I was trying to relate maturely to the world I lived in.

In this period, Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) was formed as a national organization to address these national issues. There was an SDS group on ISU's campus, which, like the national organization, by 1970 had split into the Revolutionary Youth Movement if and Weatherman, which ultimately, by involving itself in criminal acts of violence, was driven underground.

At ISU we had a number of Vietnam veterans, and some people who weren’t veterans but wished they were and pretended to be. Some faculty members and clergy did draft counseling, discussing with those who were or might be drafted what options they had available to them if they didn’t wish to go to war. In 1968, Lyndon Johnson decided not to run for re-election, and he was succeeded by Richard Nixon.

SPYING BY THE FBI

The dissent, conflict, and challenges to authority everywhere visible in the Civil Rights Movement and the Anti-Vietnam War Movement was deeply frightening to those who were committed to the status quo, traditional assumptions, and their own privilege. As a defensive reaction, and as a consequence of his own bigotry and paranoia, in addition to using the FBI to infiltrate, disrupt, and destroy the Civil
Threats on Faculty Lives

I also had students in some of my classes whom I suspected were FBI informants. These fingers anxiously took notes on everything I said but never did very well on exams. In 1970, I and four other faculty members received threats on our lives in the form of postcards ostensibly from the Ku Klux Klan and from the Minute Men ("Traitors beware, even now the cross-hairs on are on the back of your necks"). And my wife and I also received separate messages composed of words cut from newspapers and magazines: "Communist, the fire in your garage will be in your bedroom next." Well, that explained the evidence of the small fire in our garage that we'd discovered the week before. (It had burned a cardboard box full of rocks and charred the wheel of a lawn-mower.) We'd assumed that our young sons might have been playing with matches, but they'd denied it. Obviously, then, this was a clear threat. But we couldn't afford to be intimidated by it. We had work to do.

So we explained the situation to our sons in their second-story bedroom, and gave them a long rope to tie to the foot of a bed. "And if there's a fire in the bedroom, toss the rope out the window and alight down." They thought that sounded like a good plan.

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After that we upped the ante by asking the postal authorities for an investigation of the postcard mailings, called the FBI and reported the threats to the then-Chief of Police at Normal. Making a formal complaint and naming names of those in town whom we thought might be responsible for the harassment. The Chief said he knew those people; they wouldn’t do things like that. Even so, after our push-back, all threats and harassment ceased.

KENT STATE AND JACKSON STATE KILLINGS: THE REACTION

During the 1960s, President Nixon had been secretly and illegally bombing Cambodia while promising to induce the U.S. to withdraw from Vietnam. War protests continued. On ISU’s campus, the SDS and other peace activists had held a vigil, with posters and signs, lining up at noon every Thursday for a whole year, rain, snow, and shine. In April, 1970, just when people had the perception that the war was winding down, Nixon ordered troops into Cambodia. A massive wave of protest, fueled by a sense of betrayal, erupted across the nation, and on May 4, the Ohio National Guard opened fire on students at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine. (Ten days later, city and state police, reacting to racial tensions and angry students in Jackson, Mississippi, fired on a Jackson State University dormitory, killing two (a college student and a high school senior) and wounding twelve.)

Protest of the Cambodian invasion, the student killings, and the extension of the military draft resulting student demonstra-
tions—produced a national student "upsurge"; students stopped attending classes; high school, colleges, and universities closed down. Students (a rather privileged class in America) saw clearly for the first time the type of violence that the less privileged had always lived with; and they realized that the society’s forces of established authority were capable of killing their young.

The ISU participated in this general reaction to the killings. There were rallies, sleep-outs on the Quad, and a lowering of the American flag on the main flagpole on half staff for six days to commemorate the Kent State dead and the two Black Panthers murdered in Chicago. Angry at this, some influential townee organized a group of laborette and never-do-wells weren’t at home, invaded the campus, and raised the flag when it was lowered, a seventh day for Malcolm X. After this gang had raised the flag, they left, it was lowered again, and they returned. This time they climbed the pole and cut the ‘yard high up so that the flag could not be lowered again. After they left, students shimmed up the pole, and used the sewed yard to lower the flag to half staff. Thinking that the “hard hats” might return to raise the flag yet again, Braden brought in State police in riot gear to watch the Quad, and ordered University vehicles—trucks, cars, earth-moving equipment—to be placed in a circle around the base of the flag pole. The “hard hats” did not return.

The police charge up North Street

The evident night of the Kent State demonstrations followed a couple of days of teach-ins, speeches, Quad rallies, sleep-outs, and trash fires in University restrooms. It was dark and rainy, with hundreds of...

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Progressive Action In Bloomington-Normal www.pabn.org
Suddenly everybody was running, myself included. The crowd retreated up North Street to Hovey Hall. The police charged after them, swinging their clubs, past the Watterson Dining Center and the parking lot, toward Alumni Hall. I was just ahead of the police but, running as fast as I could, hearing the clubs swishing through the air just behind my head. The rain had muddied the sidewalks, and my shoes couldn't get any traction on the slick gray silt. Fortunately, the policemen's shoes couldn't either. Swish, swish. Progress was slow. A young woman had fallen and was crying. I stopped to see if she was all right and to help her up; the police rushed by, swaying their clubs, and suddenly the woman and I were behind the police line. We went sideways into the parking lot, and I saw ahead and on the other side of North Street two administrators clubbed down on the sidewalk. Despite all this, ISU was the only State university that stayed open during the Kent State aftermath. All of the others suspended classes. ISU's continued as usual.

Following this nationwide outbreak of upheaval and violence, a news blackout descended on campus interest. From reading the mainstream press, or watching TV, you'd never know that in the year following the Kent and Jackson State massacres there were just as many campus demonstrations and upheavals as there had been in 1969.
In his brief time at ISU, Berlo showed little regard for the school's history, traditions, and habitual modes of operation. Faced with State-level funding constraints and a tight budget, he quickly moved to centralize administrative control in his office. He abolished the Colleges; he showed his contempt for shared governance by refusing to attend meetings of the Academic Senate; he contrived to keep the faculty perpetually off-balance through a style of unpredictability, arbitrarily rearranging priorities and shuffling people into new positions. During his term a large Presidential house with an added garage was constructed at public expense on university property. Berlo had also worked out a contract with Food Services, such that, in exchange for periodic payment, his family's groceries came through University purchase from central stores. Berlo maintained his centralized administrative control by establishing a climate of fear and
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playing one faculty faction against another, conferring favors on some and humiliating others. People were terrified.

And then a humor campaign began, making fun of Berlo and his methods: there was a rapid proliferation of bulletheaded letters and memos commenting on events, cartoons; a small newspaper devoted to ridiculing and poking holes in the Berlo mystique of terror. With humor, people relaxed; once they began laughing at Berlo, his power to inspire fear ad paralysis collapsed.

From various administrative offices documents began coming forth showing evidence of mismanagement of funds, particularly in using unauthorized funds for garage construction, investigations started, and Berlo resigned (as many people said at the time) "to avoid indictment."

In my opinion, shared governance, which had survived Berlo's reign of terror, began to decline in earnest in 1975 is the presidency of Gene Budig (1973-77). Executives—wherever they're found—business, universities, the government, etc.—tend to arrogate decision-making power to themselves, claiming the exigencies of the job, their responsibility/accountability to outside forces, the complexity of matters at stake, the need for efficiency, etc., etc. In some cases, it's just a lust for power. I can't speak to the motivations of Budig and his successor presidents. But I would summarize the process of declining as follows: the forms of shared governance may remain intact, but they are gradually emptied of substance; the real decisions, the shaping of debate, the framing of issues and the setting of agendas are now and now taken over by central administration. Students are co-opted, the faculty either, or give way to in-fighting, or sit on their thumbs, their attention distracted, and their energies frayed away on committees, task forces, and study groups. They are allowed the illusion that they are doing substantive and significant work, of course.
Though the trend I am writing about occurred forty years ago, there is more to learn from the period. For now, in 2007, the United States is in a situation which has strong similarities to then; we have an ongoing war that doesn’t seem amenable to military resolution (though we don’t yet have a military draft) and we’re using depleted uranium on foreigners rather than Agent Orange; we have a government that lies to its people; we have massive surveillance of law-abiding citizens and a government that claims the right to eavesdrop on our phones and monitor our telephone and computer communications; we have widespread corruption and war profiteering in high places; we have institutional racism, and discriminatory hate crimes on the increase; we have a spreading distrust of authority figures (in our case, those charged with enforcing Homeland Security on behalf of this President’s “war on Terror”); we have a simmering sense of anger, frustration, outrage, disgust, cynicism, and fear (if not of terrorism, then of Constitutional erosion and the loss of civil liberties; of growing disparities in the distribution of wealth, which will have huge consequences for succeeding generations of a flawed, electoral process which caters to the democracy; of global warming, climate change, and the mass extinction of species; of endless war-time, and of possible nuclear annihilation).

I don’t believe that this simmering stew of motivators will be cooled out by the trend and circles of American Idols, Fox News, video games, Zocks Balboa IX, or whatever else is trotted out to distract us. Nor will it be cooled by low morale, despair, or orchestrated fear campaigns (“To question or deny is unpatriotic.” Tell that to Thomas Jefferson.) Some of us who were activists 40 years ago, remain activists today. I can conceive of no other way to live my life. But I’ll tell you this. The stakes are even higher now. And time is very short.