DIGITAL HISTORICAL COLLECTION PROGRAM

INTERVIEW WITH AULIKKI OLSEN (Mrs. Kenneth)

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LINCOLN, MASS.

MRS. OLSEN: When we first got married, Ken was a student [at MIT], as an undergraduate. We lived on the first floor of Westgate West, a two-story kind of barracks. It was not insulated and therefore quite primitive. They were all MIT people, and located very close to where Ken worked. He worked on the first computer at MIT. We didn't need a car for he would walk to his office.

INT: Was this your first time living in the U.S.?

MRS. OLSEN: Oh no, I had been a foreign student in this country. I went back [to Europe.] We got married in Europe, and then we came back, and Ken attended MIT. I had a job for a while, and then our first child was born. After that, we moved to the suburbs and Ken worked at Lincoln Lab in Lexington. One day, I remember, he came home and he said, "You know, I have an interesting idea. I wonder if I should start a business myself." I didn't know how to take it, really. Then he said, "If it fails, it means that you have to take a job." I said, "That's fine. I don't mind that." I think he went around shopping for a partner. I can't remember how many people he really asked, but finally Harlan Anderson said yes. They both left Lincoln Lab and started making what were called, building blocks. It was real tough in the

beginning. We did everything.

INT: Tell me about that.

MRS. OLSEN: We had no problem what to do on week-ends. We went to the plant and cleaned. And that meant everybody in the family. Our kids would look forward to going to the plant because the watchman would give them a nickel. I would clean the toilets, and they would clean the coffee cups, and Ken would clean the work area. It was really regular physical work but it worked out very well for three years. Then it got to be too big for us to take care of. We had one area on the second floor, and another one on the top floor. We had to go through other businesses in order to get to the very top. The old mill had floors leaning in places and the layout was almost like a maze to get lost in.

We had the first Christmas parties on the top floor. In the beginning we knew everybody. We knew what was happening, who was sick, or who wasn't able to do something. Everybody brought something to the parties, so there was no cost at all. Somebody was always a Santa Claus. In that kind of group everyone was an "ultimate entrepreneur", it was a grassroots thing; the families together, starting a business. Then, of course, it got bigger. Along the way, you just sort of lost touch because you can't keep everybody's families in mind.

INT: You never envisioned that it would grow to the

size [it's grown]?

MRS. OLSEN: No, actually I think what Ken had in mind in the beginning was not at all the size of the business. I think what he had in mind -- since I know him rather well, I think -- was just a challenge. He wanted to do something that he was very interested in, and that he thought he saw clearly what was needed, and then he wanted to be the one who decided. So at Lincoln Lab he really didn't have that kind of opportunity. I might be misinterpreting Ken, but I don't think so. He was not at all interested in the profit, except that that was emphasized by others, of course. I don't think he really felt that making a profit right away was his way of doing things, but he did it because of AR&D [reference to American Research and Development, venture capital firm]. It was obvious that's what business was all about.

INT: Was Ken more interested in the technology, in the things that he was making?

MRS. OLSEN: I think he still is. I think if he would have a choice, I think he would be a designer. Absolutely, he's very fascinated by that. He's a very good industrial designer, as far as I'm concerned, but he doesn't have time. In the past, he would show me what he was designing, and ask for my opinion about it because I have very definite ideas. We don't always agree, but I have very definite ideas about design. Then at times my ideas were applied in the finished product. He doesn't

have very much time anymore for that, and that's a shame, because he likes it. But, of course, it's a different kind of a challenge, what he's doing now. It's a much more, what would I call it, multifaceted kind of a challenge, because he not only manages the business world but he manages the human element, which always brings in complications.

From the beginning, I decided that I would stay out of it. I've seen many wives meddle in the business and I felt it was a bad idea. Then of course, our mentor, General Doriot, was very interested in how the wives' opinions were applied. He advised me definitely not to get involved in the business, and not to get involved with the wives. He said if there was anything wrong with the business, the wives would come to me and I'd get all the dirt. You can be friendly, and courteous, but your private life should be separate from the business. It will save you a lot of trouble. He was absolutely right. Very good advice, except often people don't understand. They think that I am just aloof. But to me it makes common sense. That's his advice, and I've followed it, and I've avoided almost all -- not all -- problems with the wives.

INT: Can you comment on the early days and the relationship with General Doriot and American Research and Development as an organization?

MRS. OLSEN: I remember very clearly when we went there

for the seed money. Their offices were at the John Hancock Building in Boston. I can't remember what floor. We had no business experience; we were truly beginners in business.

INT: Did you also go?

MRS. OLSEN: Oh, yes. General Doriot insisted on it. Lois Anderson and I were interviewed separately from the husbands. We entered General Doriot's office and there was a severe Frenchman, immaculately dressed, sitting at his desk. In back of him there was a couch that was covered on the back of it with a cowhide, in black and white. It was a very fascinating kind of a picture, because it was so very definite: black and white. He looked at us and he asked all kinds of questions. Of course, I was terrified. He was just like one of my father's friends, very severe, very highly educated man. There we were: Lois and I. We didn't know anything. I was sure we flunked. He just didn't give any kind of indication that he approved of either one of us. When it was all over, he walked over and he put his arm around my shoulders -- the French do that -- and he said, "I think we have a lot in common. We both have accents." I felt that was very rude to Lois Anderson. So I said, "I'm sure Lois has an accent, too." So General Doriot looked at Lois and says, "But it doesn't come from Europe." General Doriot could be quite harsh. Afterwards he said that my accent convinced him to give us money, [LAUGHS] which I don't believe at all. He was such a smooth

Frenchman.

INT: What did he want to know? What was he asking of you?

MRS. OLSEN: Well, he was at Harvard Business School at the time, and he had this one lecture that he gave to the wives of his students. For instance, associating with the wives of your husband's partners, not getting chummy but being courteous and businesslike and polite. He asked all kinds of questions. I said I liked cross-country skiing and cooking - that was a good point for me, for a Frenchman, absolutely. He asked about our backgrounds. My father was an Old Testament scholar and a pastor. That was good. My father had a lot of friends in France. That was good. A sort of chemistry developed between the General and me because I was European. Even if I was terrified of him, I just felt I was talking to one of my father's friends because that's the kind of association it was. He would invite Ken and me, from time to time, to dinners. His stern appearance was just on the surface; he really could be gentle and kind. He was not at all the lion that he put on, at least to the ones that he liked. You see, [General Doriot] either liked people, or he didn't like them. If you were in the category that he liked, you could do anything, and it was alright. The one he didn't like couldn't do anything right. It was just that kind of black and white. I was so correct in the beginning; he was very much a "black and white" person. He was fascinating. He had a very strong French

accent. I never had any problem with that I suppose because I'm used to accents, but a lot of people had a problem with his accent. We used to tease him and say, "Oh, you go into your closet every day for one hour to practice your accent."

INT: Ken said to ask you about [General Doriot's] parties.

MRS. OLSEN: Those were "Real Parties." He lived on Lime Street. Did you ever go there?

INT: No, but I know the location.

MRS. OLSEN: His home used to be the old stables, when Beacon Hill was occupied by the Old families. The horses and the servants would live on the lower part of the Hill. Mrs. Doriot was a very, very knowledgeable person and had extremely refined taste. Her parties were successful because of the interesting collage of people. I always remember the New Year's Eve parties, because we always ended up listening to the Marseillaise, and the General would tell us about his wartime experiences. He was a General in the American Army. A very cosmopolitan person. You don't get very many of those nowadays. Every once in a while Ken and I really miss him because he was so unique. He had his negative points, like all of us. He could take a person completely apart in front of everybody, just absolutely, the French way, just put them down. On the other hand, he was very poetic, and loved

music, and always treated me with great kindness. I think he had an almost more close relationship with me than with Ken because Ken is a very private person. Ken doesn't really open up. He's Norwegian. He's just a very closed kind of a person about his personal matters. But I am very much, often too flamboyant. Georges and I became very good friends. We had a code. I would call him and say "This is Agent Number 5. Is Agent number 1 there?" And he would say something in French, and then he would whisper and say, "That will confuse them." Then I would talk to him about whatever we were planning. [LAUGHS]

He had a summer place in Manchester-by-the-Sea [Massachusetts] and we would go there quite often. I'd go there often by myself. Georges Doriot and I became the minority farm workers for his maid. [Eda <>] We were supposed to collect all the seeds from the flowers. We had to meet our quota or we wouldn't get lunch.

I guess I didn't take the General as seriously as most people did. I started to have his [remembrances recorded] and the machine broke. I never went back. That's a shame, because they're writing a book on him now.

INT: Who is writing it?

MRS. OlSEN: I forget now. I think it's a Frenchman. He hasn't interviewed us yet. I don't know if he will or

not. I should think that he would, because we got to know Georges very well. His wife died of leukemia, and that just devastated him. My husband gave the eulogy at the funeral. The General felt badly that he had spent so much time at business instead of with her. So he kept advising all the business people after that: "If you're married, do spend time with your wife while she's living." I really miss him and Edna.

INT: Were there some guiding principles that he proposed to Ken on the business side?

MRS. OLSEN: I shouldn't talk for Ken, but my observation was that he was very limiting, and at the same time he wanted people to be independent. He was really not logical at times. He wanted people to be independent, and at the same time he wanted them to run to him for advice. Ken hardly ever did that, because Ken has the same kind of a streak. I think that he more or less let Ken operate independently and just have reports from him. I don't really know because I wasn't involved with that. So I shouldn't second guess what it was all about.

INT: Can I ask you about the time that you spent in Poughkeepsie, and your observation of the IBM environment?

MRS. OLSEN: They never invited wives at IBM. I had no contact with IBM.

INT: Yet when you and Ken formed Digital, you made a point to involve the families at the holiday gatherings and that sort of thing. The opposite.

MRS. OLSEN: I am just very people oriented. I like to have that kind of a relationship, but it had nothing to do with anything, any particular company or any experience. It was my natural kind of reaction. Poughkeepsie was an interesting experience, because here Ken was working from MIT at IBM. I think you probably have read that he said that was the first experience of how it would feel to work in a Communist environment. The IBM experience was, I think, positive for Ken but not for me.

INT: The SAGE project that they were involved with was interesting, from both a technology and management perspective -- designed in the MIT way but manufactured at IBM. One of the things that interests me in watching Digital and how it grew from a core of a few people to a multi-billion dollar corporation is the way people work together. Maybe this is to Ken's credit, the corporate culture.

MRS. OLSEN: You lose something in the process. Once it gets to a certain size, it's not any more the laboratory where everybody is working together for one reason or another. The big is not always the best, but of course you can't avoid that. You do not exist unless you grow to a certain degree, at least. For the longest time, I

think Ken had the definite theory of not growing too fast, because I remember him emphasizing that: "You can't grow very fast because then you will be out of control." Now, I don't know what are the limits to a growth, because I'm not on that end of it. It's just not my line. I don't think about those things. I think about the birds and the bees.

INT: Looking at this conservatory, it's beautiful.

MRS. OLSEN: Thank you. I play classical music so the plants do well.

INT: I've heard that theory. In the early days, were you at all involved in the hiring or evaluating of people who came to work at Digital?

MRS. OLSEN: No, I did not. Along the way, quite often, I met people who were supposed to be hired. I would have an opinion of them, and usually if my opinion was negative and they still hired the person, along the way it became obvious that I had been right. When Ken mentions at times that he's sorry at times that he hasn't taken my advice, that's exactly it. Of course the decision wasn't always his. There used to be quite a few people involved. But at the same time I usually would look for certain qualities in a person, and if I see those qualities missing, or certain qualities too much emphasized, then I always feel that that's not the person for the company.

INT: What are the qualities that you look for?

MRS. OLSEN: That's very elusive. That's very elusive. Let me think about it. Usually a person who is very impressed by himself or herself, or the importance of their own ego, I automatically have a negative reaction to. Another thing is a person who obviously doesn't have very well polished marbles. That's very cruel. I take back those words. But along the way those marbles won't get shinier, just duller. That comes across in many ways. I used to like Gordon Bell. Gordon and I had very interesting discussions about things. I wanted him to build one of those hanging bridges like they have in Africa. I think Gordon was ready to start, but I think his wife stopped him.

However, Gordon changed along the way. He became something quite different. He became too impressed by Gordon Bell. I hated to see that happen. It was just the opposite of growing up. That was almost like a metamorphosis, but in the opposite direction; instead of becoming something better, he became something much smaller and tightly wound.

What other qualities...imagination. I'm always for the flamboyancy. I'd rather have a clown than somebody who is dull. I love somebody who is flamboyant. We just discovered that Marty Hoffman is an accomplished guitarist and singer because he performed "Nashville" at

a dinner at his house. Nashville is not my style, but I thought it was just terrific. So I offered to be his agent. He turned me down.

Talking about company lawyers, when we incorporated we had to have a lawyer, of course. We'd never dealt with lawyers before and we had this old Boston law firm, the name escapes me. [John Barnard] He had a fascinating office. It was downtown Boston. It was the kind of office you wanted a lawyer to have: dark and full of books, full of papers, with a very competent person in the middle of all that - and, not only that, a real gentleman. He saw us coming in and he did not say, "Oh, my God, what neophytes. What am I going to do with them?" He was most courteous, like we had always been his clients, and he helped us. I became one of the directors, for tax reasons, for one week. He said I had to do it for one week, no more. Perhaps somewhere there still are that kind of offices; courteous old lawyers, knowing what they do.

INT: There are many kinds of people who have sort of gone out of evolution unfortunately, like that and like General Doriot, a sort of species we see very infrequently.

MRS. OLSEN: It's too bad. It's like old trees. We just lost an elm tree, that was, I guess, a hundred years old. There's nothing you could do. It's a matter, I suppose, of survival of the fittest. Yet I think it's a different

kind of evolution. It is the evolution of different kind of life circumstances, where these kind of things don't have a place any more. That's a pity because it's a kind of living that is much more amiable to human beings. Instead of being in a great hurry, or instead of being very sophisticated, one allows for the human kind of tendencies. Ken and I still try very much to preserve that kind of life, one way or another. Nowadays, I think most people are very much in a race for perfection. And if you achieve it, it's very difficult to live with perfection. Ken found an interesting quotation in a Mexican garden fixture and it says, - "It is better to have imperfection with grace, instead of perfection without grace," which is absolutely right. One is not embarrassed having imperfection. When Ken and I see a brick wall, for instance, we always look for the imperfections, because otherwise it is very difficult to take it, so terribly perfect, so slick, no imperfections there. It's the same way with human beings. It's marvelous to meet with a person who admits something or is comfortable with imperfections. I think Ken has very much that kind of [attitude].

INT: Because it's the flaws or the imperfections that really create the character.

MRS. OLSEN: Absolutely, yes. I used to be much more judging, putting the person down, much more like the French do. But living with Ken has been an experience because he has this very, oh, forgiving mind, forgiving

nature. I'll say, "Well, why in the world did that person do that?" And Ken will say, "He must have his reasons. Do not judge because you do not know it all. Even when you know, do not judge because that's what life is all about." One does not judge the other people, and then the life becomes quite pleasant. We are perfectly normal people as far as anything is concerned, but this kind of a thing adds a pleasant kind of condition to life. It's a softer kind of a thing. Business often is very brutal. I was just reading that book about Nabisco. [Bryan Burrough and John Helyar, Barbarians at the Gate: The Fall of RJR Nabisco]. I thought it was just horrible, because I know some of those people. I just couldn't believe it. The brutality and the scheming. That's not what life is all about even if you are in business. So I think that's one of the qualities that perhaps comes within Digital culture; even if it's quite brutal to be in business, one still has this other side that is like a nice, soft flow of river.

When I was designing the yard I thought about it a lot. I have designed the yard as a green river. Once I had a couple of people come and take a look at it, because they had heard about it. It's very imperfect still, but that's what life is all about. One makes mistakes, or changes things. Nothing ever stays the same. When you look at it, the lawn is the green river and the plantings are on the banks of the river. Then you walk around and you come to different areas. I'm interested in the Japanese design. Part of the Japanese design is, of

course, making believe that the element is not what it is and it becomes something different. I took a course at the Arnold Arboretum by one of the leading landscape designers on advanced Japanese landscape design. The fascinating thing that she pointed out was that the purpose of the garden is not as much the design as how you live in it. One must always have places in the garden where you can sit down and look back. That is very desirable as far as life is concerned too. One must sit down, and look around, and look back. That's part of Digital, perhaps, learning from the experience. It's the pleasant thing to never really to be too harsh, because once you become too harsh or too impressed by yourself then you might as well be dead because you've lost the touch for life. Or if you lose touch with normal people. The beautiful thing about being here, living in this particular town, is that you can do anything you want. People are very supportive. I know everybody. It doesn't make any difference what status you are. You are perfectly free. The freedom is there and it's a nice thing. Ken can do anything he wants. Every once in a while Ken and I have sort of a funny remark, "such and such wouldn't be doing this." People in big business.

INT: I find your comments about the Japanese garden interesting, because the contemplative nature is as much of the design of a Japanese garden as the elements, how it makes you think. The objects are very carefully placed.

MRS. OLSEN: Of course, you have to translate the Japanese design. When I was in Japan with Ken, the first thing I asked was to be taken to a rock nursery because I'm a rock person. I love rocks. My Japanese guides stood there stunned. I was the first westerner ever to ask to be taken to a rock nursery. They almost kissed my hand. We all went there and we selected rocks that I wanted to take back with me as gifts to friends who were also rock people. All the Japanese came out, and they couldn't understand why did I have to come all the way there to pick rocks. Have you seen Japanese garden at the Museum of Fine Arts? A friend of mine is a landscape designer, so when it was first done we went there to look at it. I said to her, "What do you think about it? Take a good look at it." We looked at it, and I said it was too busy. Last week she asked somebody who is an expert on that kind of gardening. He said the same thing, too busy, too many things. It's elimination instead of adding. Of course you have to translate, see. Once you bring a Japanese garden into this culture, it becomes something different. It will only have the Japanese elements perhaps, but it won't be the same because we just don't have those kind of gardens.

INT: To go back to Digital for a second, from your vantage point, how do you feel the company is responsible to the communities where it does business?

MRS. OLSEN: Well, we always believe in supporting the local enterprises. We're very interested in conservation

and we are supporting many enterprises who are doing that. In Maynard, I don't know. I don't know if they are very much interested in conservation or not. Here in Lincoln we are just conservation crazy.

[END OF SIDE A].

INT: ...[Digital has a reputation] as a very, very good corporate neighbor. We're careful about ecological issues. We give honest people honest work, those kinds of things. Is that something from your perspective you that you feel is important for the company to do on a conscious level?

MRS. OLSEN: Yes, absolutely. That's soft, not harsh. When I say soft, that doesn't mean weak. People often associate soft with weak. It's the exact opposite of weak; it takes much more strength to be soft in a good way, instead of being harsh. Harsh always cuts you down one way or the other.

[Regarding the environment] I've been reading a very interesting book, Native American Architecture. Actually I am giving Ken the definition of architecture that they give in the book. What it essentially says is that, architecture is not a building, it is the whole environment. In many ways, it probably implies not only the building process of it, but it implies how the company is run, because the applications are there. Ken and I have always been interested in architecture. Of

course we live in a town where there's more architects than anything else! We have one friend, Richard Bolt of Bolt, Beranek and Newman, and every once in a while when I meet him I say, "Dick, you have to come and see what we've done at the swimming pool because we've built a pavillion, and it's like the European pavillions, except we've sort of enhanced it. And he says, "Oh, you amateurs, it's just disgusting, you amateurs are often better than we professionals." You can see I have a gazebo below, that's an older one, and then I have what I call a pavillion. It has an interesting feature. Our church is in Boston, on Park Street. About five or six years ago, they re-did the main sanctuary, and in back of the pulpit there was paneling. One day I went there, and the panel was in the dumpster. And I said, "What are you going to do with that?" The architect said, "It's going to go to the dump." I said, "No way, bring it to my garage." So they brought it to my garage, now it's in the pavillion. That's what architecture is all about; you use materials that are available and you use them in such a way that they will be not discarded unnecessarily but used in a different way.

INT: The real meaning of recycling, too.

MRS. OLSEN: Exactly, yes.

INT: There are many people who feel that Ken played a very, very significant role in the creation of this "Massachusetts miracle" that was talked about for a

while. What do you think about that?

MRS. OlSEN: I think it was really overplayed. I think Dukakis took advantage of that in his campaign, and it became sort of a slogan. Unfortunately, it didn't last. People who were latching themselves on to that are greatly disappointed, I think. In a way I guess they hold Ken responsible to that, but of course it was beyond his control what happened afterwards. So I don't think, at least I don't think Ken feels, that he is responsible. It just happened to be the matter of growth in the State at the time, which was very conducive to good conditions and I don't think Ken really is that impressed by his part in it. Ken really never emphasizes his importance in one way or another. He was just part of the conditions that happened. For instance, when the company was started, it just happened to be that it was an almost avant garde kind of thing, that eventually became an everyday kind of a thing: computers. A different kind of a world.

INT: You didn't anticipate at the time the impact that the computer would have on people's work, people's lives?

MRS. OLSEN: I'm not computer oriented. I like to do things with my hands. Ken still is very incensed that I don't get a word processor but I have an old typewriter on the third floor. I like to sit down and think about what I'm going to write. I don't like to use a machine. I use the old typewriter and I make mistakes and I

correct them. Ken says I'm crazy. It would be so easy just to use a word processor. Perhaps one of these years I might do it. Somebody gave me an electric knife for Christmas. I said, "This is blasphemy." I've never used it. I gave it away. Ken says I come from a different century. Perhaps. But I'm not computer oriented. I'm just not that way. There's something there like Robert Frost's "Fences", there's something there that sets me against it, in a way. I'm not against other people using them but I prefer the slow process, instead of instant editing, or whatever. As a matter of fact, I like to write by hand often, make the corrections, and that suits me fine.

INT: Hand-writing, letter-writing, may be lost arts as a result of computing technology, the telephone, faxing, videos, all of that.

MRS. OLSEN: I still send handwritten thank-you notes and people are often absolutely stunned when I do that, which is very funny, because they don't expect it. For instance, if people drive me all the way to a concert in Boston, and give me a dinner at the Faculty Club, certainly I should write them a note. But when I did that, they said, "We just didnn't believe it, when we saw it."

INT: Over these decades you've had to transition from very private figures to public figures....

MRS. OLSEN: No, you're wrong. We're not public figures, because we very carefully make it so. I am not known to anybody, because I very carefully avoid giving any kind of publications any kind of interviews or pictures. They used to pester me all the time until we changed our telephone number. That suits me fine. It makes me very normal. Ken, of course, can't avoid it, because he just happens to be known. But he doesn't really consider himself well-known, unless people come to him and talk to him. We're really very normal, very normal, average people that can blend into the crowd anywhere. I give you a very funny example. Whenever I use my charge cards, sometimes people say, "Are you such and such?" And I said, "Well, I guess so." Once I gave my charge card and the lady says, "Will you tell your husband that we are so happy with the last business transaction we had with him." I said, "Well, that's very nice. Which computer did you buy?" And she said, "No, the Cadillac." There's a Kenneth Olsen Cadillac [dealership]! [LAUGHS]

INT: I'm sure the public has at time forced themselves on you. It's admirable you have managed to maintain a separation from that.

MRS. OLSEN: I have very, very protective friends. They would never give information about me. They respect my privacy. They know all about the business and they know all about us and they treat us just like anybody else. There is no difference whatsoever. I think it's just beautiful. I can do anything I want. I can just

function in a normal way which I guess many of the wives of the businessmen can't do. They have things done by other people, and they have to have all kinds of protective things. I don't, because that's the way I have worked it out. It's beautiful. It makes life very pleasant. We still get unpleasant experiences, but that's part of life. Somebody comes to the door, I'm not supposed to answer the door, but I'm very impulsive by nature, so I go and answer it, and then it might be somebody who wants to come in and see Ken and complain. But that doesn't happen very often. It's not worth worrying about. I had a painter come once, and he had never been here and he asked people where we [lived] and people said, "What do you want to know that for?" He said, "I'm a painter and I'm supposed to paint." They said, "Oh, we've heard that before." Finally the poor fellow went to the police, and the Chief of Police, Mr. Arena said, "What do you want to go there for?" He [explained] and Chief Arena called me and said, "There's a fellow who claims to be a painter." I said, "Please let him come!!" No, he [Chief Arena] came with the painter to make sure it was the real thing. Isn't that nice protection? One time we came home, and there were people demonstrating in front. They were saying something like, Ken Olsen is on the Board of MIT and MIT is against minority rights or something. Ken went in the house and I went and talked to them. I asked what was going on. They said, "We are demonstrating in front of every single member of the MIT Board because they are not building housing for minorities, instead they're putting in a

parking lot." I said, "Have you ever met Ken Olsen?" They said, "No, we haven't." "Well, how do you know if he's really against your rights?" They said, "Well, you got a point there, but I don't think he would like to talk to us." I said, "Sure, he will." They said, "Who are you?" I said, "I happen to be married to him." So they all came around me and they said, "How nice of you to come out and talk to us." One of them said, "Okay fellows, they are okay. Let's go out." They all left. It's a peculiar kind of thing that they have an image of you that you are not associated with at all.

INT: In the early days of the business when the Mill in Maynard was selected as a site, it was a very inexpensive space to start a business. That was the main reason?

MRS. OLSEN: Yes. It was convenient. It was available and we could manage to pay for it. It was only one floor, you know that.

INT: Right, above the furniture store?

MRS. OLSEN: Yes. I thought it was second hand furniture place but I understand it was all new furniture. It looked like a warehouse but it was really a store, I think. I never really found out. What was its name?

INT: Arthur's.

MRS. OLSEN: Arthur was there, and we had to walk through

Arthur's, up the stairs in order to get there. We didn't have a private entrance. It was not really entering into the store but going past the store to the stairs.

INT: Ken told us an interesting story about you at a European trade show in the early days. It was a computer show. Digital had the handbooks which were the bound books that described the products that we had available and were very, very popular. You were working at the trade show and handing them out to some of the people. Can you comment on that?

MRS. OLSEN: That must have been in Germany. Now, I remember. My daughter was with me, I can't remember how old she was then, probably about 12. We passed by all the booths, and it just didn't make any sense to me that they were not handing out the literature. Instead they were expecting people to ask for it. Right away I saw the point that you had to be more aggressive. So I asked the person at the booht if my daughter and I could stand there, and hand out the books. I think he was rather taken aback by this request. If I remember correctly, as a European man, he was quite reserved. My daughter and I would stand there and hand out books until we ran out of them. I think the other companies got an idea of doing the same thing because it seemed to me that they started handing out things instead of keeping them on the shelf. For the first trade show we had to build the booth ourselves. We couldn't afford very much, so we had this burlap to cover the bottom of the table, and then we got

this clever idea that Ken and I would silkscreen 'Digital' on it, on an angle, sort of a 1940's modern! I don't know what happened to that cloth which I thought was worth nothing. I should have really kept it. It was really a very homemade looking thing. You could have sold pies there! In one of the shows we had, -- you see that big leaf rubber plant there? That's a Digital rubber plant. It's really about 30 years old. It has a peculiar history. In one of the trade shows in New York, the fellows were bringing all the material back and the rubber plant was one of them. They stopped in a motel overnight, and they left the rubber plant in the van. It got so cold that the rubber plant froze. Afterwards, I got the plant. By the way, the bamboo [POINTING TO CONSERVATORY] is from Digital, too. It [had] died. So, that's a Digital nursery there. That rubber plant sulked for about ten years. Didn't do a thing. It just sat there. It didn't die but it didn't grow. Now, it's doing quite well. I had to transplant it. I call it the 'Digital rubber plant.' The bamboo was dying. So they said, "Oh, take it home, it's going to die." Now this plant looks beautiful, tender loving care, that's all. I talk to it, and [play] classical music.

INT: Prefers Mozart to Beethoven?

MRS. OLSEN: Yes.

INT: I have a note here [regarding] the board members in the early days. Do you have some observations on the

make-up of the board?

MRS. OLSEN: Now, let's see, there was the General, Mr. Congleton, [Dorothy Rowe] Harry Hoagland, Jay Forrester, - now there's a character. Who else? Harlan and Ken. Jay Forrester was a character. If I'm correct, he had this theory of business that if you follow his formula you will never have tremendous highs or tremendous lows. Now, I might misinterpret this, but you would have, more or less, even keel. He wanted to test that theory on Digital. I don't know if Ken cooperated or not. I doubt it.

INT: After he left the computer business, he did System Dynamics. An interesting theory of computer modeling of corporate structures. Recently it's been applied to some early education with young children. It has to do with internal workings of a business.

MRS. OLSEN: To me he's a real scientist, because he has the character, and he's fascinated by his own ideas. I like him.

INT: I like him too. One of the more interesting things is the pairing of Forrester and Bob Everett on the Whirlwind Project at the computer lab.

MRS. OLSEN: Yes. Bob Everett is an interesting person. I happened to come from Europe once on the same plane with him, and we discovered that we are aficionados of

detective stories. So every once in a while a book appears on my desk and it's from Bob. He has just read it and [there's a note] -- "You have to read this." I don't know if you read detective stories, but there's one writer who writes about the Southwest, Indians and all that. Bob Everett is very devoted to that particular writer -- it's quite a brainy kind of detective story in a way, brainy kind of writing. Reading detective stories is like putting a puzzle together. It's the most fascinating thing because you get these little pieces and then you just have to figure out how it's going to go together. I like crime stories too.

INT: True crime?

MRS. OLSEN: True crime. If they're well done. I'm just reading now Mr. Bugliosi's [And the Sea will Tell] book about the crime in one of the islands of Hawaii, Palmyra. It frustrates you because the person who obviously did it is so very, very cold that you always wonder how these criminals get this kind of a personality. They always think that they are above the law.

INT: My husband gets a little nervous 'cause I read them quite frequently. He says, "Why are you interested in those horrible stories?" I'm really interested in what motivates people to do what they do. What is the set of circumstances?

MRS. OlSEN: And get away with it for a long time. It's really quite fascinating. It's gruesome in a way. I don't like books where either sex or violence is for the sake of sex or violence but if it is part of the natural story, - fine. [INTERRUPTION]. I used to be Agatha Christie fan. But of course you know, she's not very good literature. But if you're traveling, you can leave the book and pick it up and it doesn't bother you. But some of the more involved things, you have to really be careful in concentrating.

INT: We got on this because we were talking about the Board.

MRS. OLSEN: And Bob Everett, it's all his fault!

INT: I have yet to speak to Mr. Hoagland and Mr. Congleton. I'd like to talk to them because I've talked to the other early Board members. Did you ever attend Board meetings?

MRS. OLSEN: At times we had dinners but it was very much of, how would I put it? A modest affair. I always remember the first dinner that the Congletons took us to. I guess that was their responsibility. General Doriot had told them to do that. There was no question in their minds that we just were nice people but nothing really to count on, which was fine with us. But it always strikes me very funny; there was a definite pecking order. It's very much so still in some companies. We didn't mind it.

We were just innocent, very naive. We still are, we're very naive. We like to be that way.

Naivete is an interesting quality. It is almost like one part of you is still a child, a child with certain knowledge. Like my four and a half year old granddaughter, the youngest one of them all. My dog just died last week, and this little girl was just devoted to this dog. She said, "Now my heart has broken into little pieces and it will never be whole again." That kind of naivete. One has the knowledge, but at the same time, this beautiful naivete. That's another quality I look for in people. I'd rather have a person who is naive and shy than one that is very self confident and impressed by him or herself. Naivete is a very rare quality because most people want to be sophisticated. To me, naivete is a positive quality. When you say somebody is naive, often it's considered negative. [It's a] quality that I, at least, like to see in a personality. I don't know if Ken feels that it's important in a business person [or not], but it might help even there, because it shows that you have an open mind, and you have a certain quality that allows you to grow. Because it's more or less the closed mentality that will destroy people, and not give them a chance of changing. If you are willing to change in many respects, when it's pointed out to you or it becomes obvious, then that's good. That's a good point.

[END OF INTERVIEW].

DIGITAL HISTORICAL COLLECTION PROGRAM

AULIKKI OLSEN INTERVIEW II

6/18/91

Interviewer, Jamie Pearson

Lincoln, Mass.

AO: I came from a typical European family, before World War II, with eight children. My mother, you might say, had done her bit for her country! But in those times every family who was educated had people who took care of the children. So it really wasn't that much of a burden. It was a separation of labor. My father never went into the kitchen, except on Saturdays to pay the help. We always had somebody who took care of us, which was interesting, because usually it was a young person, not a nanny, or a governess, but someone who came from the country just to be in the city. I'm afraid sometimes they were rather mean to us. My mother was a typically European lady.

JP: Did you come from a small town or a large city in Finland?

AO: I think by European standards it would be small. I don't know how many people there were. It was an

interesting place though, because it was right at the beginning of the lake region. If you took a boat from my hometown, you could go all across the whole country, almost all the way to Lapland. That's going from one lake to another. We used to take them for vacation. It was a happy childhood. No TV, no radio, no bought toys. One had to figure out one's own. But then we never really had any problem that way. It was quite a different kind of way of growing up.

JP: What did your father do?

AO: He was an ordained minister. He was an Old Testament scholar. So he had great, great studies of the Old Testament. He was a European man, meaning that although he didn't look down upon women, there was a separation. Men usually were by themselves, and the women had their own coffee klatch. That was just the accepted form. There was nothing inferior. It's the way it was. That's how I grew up. I went to a private school, which had quite high standards in theoretical things. I graduated from there. Then I went to the university in Helsinki. Then I went on scholarship to this country.

JP: Was the school that you went to religious?

AO: It was church related, but so were many. Harvard

used to be church-related. It was church-related in such a way that the people who ran the whole overall administration were somehow church-related, and recommended certain people for acceptance or not. My father had friends there, and that's how I got the scholarship.

JP: Did your brothers and sisters also go to the same school in Finland?

AO: The boys went to _____; the girls and the boys went to different places. Before that, when you went to public schools, everybody was in the same, boys and girls. Then after that, with higher education, you were separated. The girls school that I went to would start at age 11. Then after you graduated, you would go to the university.

JP: Was this a boarding school?

AO: No, it was a regular day school. But in those times one could choose what they would study. There were certain things that were obligatory, but then certain ones you could choose, for instance languages. You would start one language at 11, then add one at 12, and every year adding more languages.

JP: So you studied English during that time?

AO: Yes, though it wasn't a primary language. It was German that I know much better than English. Of course, Swedish. You would also take Latin. It was just the regular European training, a little too theoretical.

JP: Very disciplined?

AO: Yes, absolutely. One did one's homework...or else. You didn't want to have the 'or else,' that's for sure.

JP: Did you want to come to the States, or did your family have friends here?

AO: I think my father thought it was a good idea. Of course, I thought I knew English, but I didn't. That was clearly shocking!

JP: You probably knew <u>English</u>, but you didn't know <u>American.</u>

AO: Well, yes, yes. Because all the professors came from England. One thing that they taught us was, if you go to America, don't learn their language and their slang because it's going to spoil your beautiful King's English. It was sort of ominous. Of course, you can't

avoid it.

America was quite a shock.

JP: You came where?

AO: I came to Chicago, because the university that I went to - Valparaiso - is right outside of Chicago. I had never seen a city like that. Let's see, what were my impressions? I came on Halloween. I wrote to my mother, "I don't understand their children. They are dressed very peculiar, and they put make-up on their faces!" My mother just said, "Oh, their parents probably don't keep an eye on them." I had no idea it was Halloween! We don't know anything about Halloween. Then afterwards, of course, somebody told me. We have All Saint's Day, but it's nothing like that. But as a country, I thought American was rough. People seemed in a terrible hurry. Nobody looked <u>at</u> you, they looked beyond you. I had great difficulty understanding where I belonged: nowhere. On the campus, there were quite a few foreign students and we sort of flocked together because we all had the same difficulty -- having a different culture as a background. Just to give you an example of what happened to one of them, once there were some American students who asked a Swedish boy, "How are you coming along?" He said, "Oh, I came along on a train yesterday." Everybody laughed.

We foreign students couldn't understand why they were laughing. The idioms are really difficult things to get. But I decided when I came to America that I would see as much as I could. So as well as I could, I took as many jobs as possible. I must have had about six or seven jobs cleaning the faculty's private quarters, and doing venetian blinds with the Soilex (?) without gloves. My hands were red all the way to the wrist! I got 50 cents an hour for that. Finally I thought if I learn another language, I might be able to do something. So I learned Spanish, in English, using a Finnish dictionary, which was a very round-about way! But my teacher thought I had a terrific accent, because Spanish is pronounced very much the way it's written. Eventually I ended up correcting papers and exams for the Spanish teacher, and of course I became very popular. Everybody wanted to be nice to me! But of course, I was very, very proper in that respect. But Americans still puzzled me very much. Because I couldn't figure them out and they couldn't figure me out, I suppose. Here was this dummy coming from Europe and trying to learn something. But underneath, it bothered me, very much.

JP: Because you're an outsider.

AO: Yes, and regardless of what you did you always did something wrong. For the longest time, it bothered me,

even when we came here, when I was married. It would bother me because I didn't do things the American way. People would say, "Why can't you at least learn the American way?", things like that. I just couldn't figure out what it was but I tried very hard. But I always botched it up, did something different. I shook people's hands, and I slightly bowed, because that's the way we were taught. People thought it was funny. I didn't think it was funny. Once I was talking to Ken about it and Ken says, "Just overlook it." After that I said to myself, "OK, fine, I'm going to be me. And it doesn't matter at all if I'm American or if I'm Finnish, that's the way it is." From then on, it didn't bother me at all. But that's one of the culture shocks: you feel like you are ridiculous, and you feel like you don't really measure up. I don't know how the foreign students are treated now, but [then], for instance, I had great animosity towards the immigration/naturalization service, because they mistreated us so terribly. Like we were cattle. They took all foreign students passports one year, and they never gave them back. We had to go as a delegation to the Chicago office and try to get the passports back. Finally, somebody found them put away in some old chest, for no reason at all. They resented us. At that time I couldn't figure out why. But afterwards I figured they really were not very well educated, first of all. They resented anyone who might have more education

than they did, and because of that they mistreated us.

JP: And as this was right after the war, there was a great surge of patriotism, and an attitude that America was the greatest.

AO: It still is. I was against the war [in the Gulf]. We are a divided household here. Because I didn't see that anything could be gained from it. And I still feel that way, when you look at what happened. It is the glorification of the military, and the glorification that the American way is the only way, the superior way. Believe me, Europeans don't really like that very much. Since I am on both sides of the fence, my gut feelings say that it shouldn't be that way. I might be an American, but I'm also European, and I feel that Americans have made a serious mistake by always cramming it down somebody's throat -- "You better become American." That's the experience I had. I talk to Ken about it sometimes, but Ken is not that sensitive about what happened to me. Because he's in a big world. He thinks about other things. He does not get very bogged down by people's criticism or unimportant things. He's right. But in a way, it's still bothers me when people say, "Hmmm, when did you [get off] the boat?"

JP: But it's this implied superiority that is very

dangerous and impolite.

AO: I can understand why Americans went against the British, because the British are very much that way, themselves.

JP: Did you travel and see more of the States?

AO: I saved every penny, every single penny that I had I saved. Because first of all, I sent packages to Finland. All their linen was falling apart, and here we had these wonderful sheets. Often I just sent sheets. They didn't have coffee, or any of these things. I just figured out exactly how much money I would need to buy books and things like that, and the rest of it I would send packages to my family. Then after that became more or less unnecessary, I saved money for travelling. I took a Greyhound bus from Chicago to San Francisco.

JP: By yourself?

AO: Yes. But along the way, there were marvelous medical students and people who couldn't figure out what country I came from, but obviously they wanted to be very nice! For instance, one of them took me through all of the casinos in Reno. We played those machines. I didn't have to pay for any of my lunches through the whole

thing! In San Francisco, I had a friend and stayed at her place. There was another Finnish girl also who had come separately. So we took a job as mother's helpers, right across from San Francisco Bay in Belvedere. It used to be a beautiful area. You'd look down upon Oakland Bay, and San Francisco, and it's high up. About 15 years ago, I went to see it again. You should never go back home. It was all built up. I couldn't find the place that I had stayed in, which was just a beautiful place. It was all spoiled. But as a student, it was an interesting experience to go there and learn about this. On the way back, I figured out how much money I would need in order to go to the Grand Canyon and Houston, and then to Chicago. When I got to Chicago I had one dollar left! I had to stay at the Y for 75 cents a night. That left a quarter. I think, how did I get back for a quarter? I don't really know. Then, on the campus again to earn more money.

It was a very good experience really, because I saw all these places. We hiked down the Grand Canyon. We were very foolish; we didn't take enough water. So beyond a certain point it was 114 degrees, and we had run out of water. Just like in the desert, and we almost collapsed. On the way back, we rode the mules -- after counting our money very carefully. The guide who was leading us took a liking to me, and tied my mule to his. I said, "Why do

you do that?" "Oh," he said, "Your mule is not quite trained yet." But by the time we got through the canyon he asked me if I would like to go to a dance with him that night. So he came all dude-d up! He had everything brand new! I thought we were going on horses. But he had a pink Cadillac! It was very funny. He went to the barber, he had on aftershave. He really wanted to impress a European girl! One time, a couple of sailors in San Francisco started to talk to us. I said, "Let's make believe that I don't know English." So the girls translated, and the fellows said, "I'd like to have a date with her." So they would translate to me, and I would say something, and then he would say something in English. It was really mean...we were laughing so hard. What else would you like to know about my very dubious past?

JP: How did you end up meeting Ken? In the States? You really wanted to marry the cowboy, right?

AO: No. He wanted to hold my hand, that's all. I loved the west. That's really my love.

One of the girls on the campus was Ken's next door neighbor in Connecticut. She invited me to come and visit them one summer. So I went, and here was this young fellow around, always offering his help. If I was

carrying a suitcase, here he comes, running fast, to carry my suitcase. So I asked them, "What's this fellow?" "Oh, he really likes you." So, I said, "Well, I don't know him." She introduced us. Ken was very shy of course. I was on my way back to Europe, so I didn't pay any attention, really.

JP: Did you ever meet his parents at the same time?

AO: I guess I did. I can't remember now for sure, if I met them then, or afterwards. See Ken graduated from MIT and went to Sweden as what they call practicant, an engineering intern. Then he came to Finland to visit. Both of my parents were actually against it. They wouldn't even talk to him. They said "No, this is ridiculous. You can't marry an American. Please. You're a European, and you've got to marry a Finn." Somehow Ken talked them into it. I didn't like America at first. I said they're very rude people. They don't have very nice manners. My mother said, "That decides that. They are just like the Germans." My mother used to say, "Don't ever marry a German. They beat their wives." So we got married, and we had great difficulty getting me out of the country, because of course the Korean War situation.

JP: Were you married there then? Did your parents come around, or no?

AO: No, they didn't come around. They just accepted the inevitable. It's different for small countries in Europe. For instance, I have a very beautiful niece, my eldest brother's daughter, who fell in love with a German banker from Geneva and they wanted to marry. He came to ask my brother if he could do that. My brother said, "Absolutely not. She's my daughter and she's not going to marry you." Would you believe the daughter just accepted that, cut off the relationship and is now married to a Finnish economist. Father knows best! But my parents just did not see it at all.

I tried to get a visa to America then and that was very difficult. You have to go for a physical, which took a long, long time. Ken says, "Why in the world did it take so long?" I said, "The doctor tried to talk me out of it." But then he said, "At least you have a good Scandanavian name." That's how partial they are. It's quite a homogenous country over there. Small countries have to be that way in order to have their identity. I think it still is very much that way. Now when I go over there, one thing about it I realize right away is that they are a different race, and I never realized that before. I thought that they were tall, but they are not necessarily tall, but there are no overweight people. It's just absolutely amazing. They are slim, in very good

shape. I never realized it when I was living there, that they have this certain kind of a look.

INT: Did you go back after your marriage?

AO: Many times, until my mother died. Then after that, I was a coward. I didn't even go to the funeral, I just couldn't face it. Now when I go back, I try to avoid going where I used to associate with my mother... emotionally it's still very difficult.

[END OF SIDE A].

INT: Going back to Ken, what made you decide he was the right one despite the protestations from your family?

AO: He has a terrific sense of humor. We laugh more than cry. He's got a terrific sense of humor, but it's not obvious to people. He's probably the most considerate person I have ever met, truly considerate. I tend to be very much quick on the draw. If somebody does something that offends me, I get the jump. Ken says, "No, they must have their reasons." Ken has that kind of a consideration, even if it doesn't agree with the principles of the person, he still sees beyond that. That's been one of the main benefits of being married to Ken, and it hasn't changed. He influences people to be

understanding, to tolerate. He may no necessarily agree with someone, yet he says, "Well, he has his reasons," or "Just look at it this way." We've been married almost 40 years now, and he never says anything bad about anybody. Putting all those things together, a good man is hard to find. People don't realize he's not an average businessman. He's not. Not at all. He's completely different from an average businessman, and that's what makes him unique. When people want to change some characteristics of the company, my daughter says, "Don't they realize that the company is what it is because of Daddy? If they want to change Daddy, then, of course, that's the way it should go, but then it's going to be a different company." Those things appealed to me. I wasn't really as much aware of all those things then except that he was just so un-American. He's taken for a European whenever we go to Europe. Perhaps because his suits are wrinkled! [LAUGH OBSCURES DIALOG].

INT: The few times I've had the chance to talk about the work that I do for the company with Ken, he comes across as much more of a philosopher than a businessman. What he says is not immediately transparent. Emerson said that an institution is "the lengthened shadow of one man." I think that applies to Ken and Digital.

AO: Of course, it can be good or it can be derogatory

because then people start to relate just to a person; but I guess it can't be avoided. What really is the main thing about Ken is that, people don't realize, he's a lot of fun. Most of the time people just deal with him in business. But he tells the most risque Navy stories some times, and I say, "Okay, Ken where did you learn that?" He says, "In the Navy." "You didn't tell it to your mother, did you?" "No, she wouldn't know how to take it." Ken is just a marvelous free spirit. We both are really free spirits. Often we confuse people very much because they don't understand us. We are just absolutely free. It's an interesting thing about success or money; it can either tie you up in knots, or it can give you absolute freedom. It's your choice. We have chosen to be free. We do anything we want, and it doesn't really matter what level anybody is or what people have, that doesn't count with us at all. It makes no difference with us. In that way, it's a marvelous freedom and Ken certainly has that. The business schedule, of course, ties him down, so he doesn't have time. That's why he goes on the canoe trip. This year it's going to be short, unfortunately.

INT: How long is it usually?

AO: Often he used to go for two weeks, but those times are gone because most people can't afford to take that

much off. For instance, my youngest son can't be away for that long. He is one of them. Actually Ken is flying one of the cousins from Tucson to go on the trip.

INT: Four people?

AO: Four this year, usually it's six.

INT: Is it white water?

AO: All white water, yes, or they have to be very skilled to deal with it. They drive to a certain point. Other years they put the canoes in the commuter airplane that they have in Canada and then they drop them off at a certain point and pick them up at certain other points. Then the others just fly Ken's plane.

INT: Do you ever go?

AO: I haven't been invited! Actually, he always challenges me when we are at Governor's Island in New Hampshire because it takes two hours to paddle around the island. I say, "Okay, I can do it." So every time he challenges me, we go and do it. It's a long distance, two hours of paddling is quite a bit. But this year, he said, "Let's take one of those shorter trips in Maine perhaps." We might go. I find it a little boring.

INT: Could you tell me how the Stratford Foundation was started? I know that you personally have been involved in Project Reach. Can you give me some background on that?

AO: The Stratford Foundation actually was Ken's idea, because he wanted to get off the Forbes Magazine list, but it backfired -- the stock went up! Then eventually, the stock went down, and he thought, "Great, now I'm going to get off it!" But he got on a negative list of people who lost! So the Stratford Foundation was put aside as an institution that would give grants to causes that we are interested in. Ken is very interested in all kinds of religious enterprises, churches or camps or whatever. He usually has a list.

My interest in Project Reach is really quite long standing involvement. It's this way. When I first came to this country, I had never seen a person of different color. I saw them in Chicago. I thought they were fascinating. I went to talk to them. They looked at me and turned away. I thought they must not like me. And then there were some on the campus, and I tried to become friends with them. They just wouldn't. So I asked somebody, "Is there something about me that they don't like?" They said, "Yes, you are different from them, and

you shouldn't really try to become friends." I couldn't understand that. I couldn't understand why; because they had a different color skin? or were they different otherwise? Over the years, this has bothered me. I talked to Ken about it several times. I'd say I didn't understand the kind of discrimination. One time I talked with John Sims about it. I said, "John, I'd like to do something that will really be a minor revolution. I would like to educate black children, so that they would have an education and come up to par with the rest of the society." This would be mainly because they would not have any other source to finance their education. John, of course, right away said, "I've been thinking about that for a long time." What I wanted to really do -- and I'm not sure I've been successful -- when I talk to people from Roxbury, I wish that they would not emphasize that they are black. I wish that they would say, "I am an American." How I started Reach was I saw an advertisement on TV, and here were black students, young folks, good looking, spoke very well and they said, "I'm proud to be an American." Not one word about being black. That's exactly what I wanted to do. I wanted them to realize they might be black but [as a white person] I don't keep saying, "I'm white," or "I'm European." But I do, Ken says!! He says, "If you say it once more, I'm going to send you back!" These black fellows were really the ideal, what I was aiming at. There's how many

students now? 150?

INT: Peter Wilson and said there were 53 selected, and there were 47 who were going to graduate in June.

AO: Yes, that's graduation only. There's others in school but I'm not quite sure the exact number because we get great numbers. We don't advertise. We get great numbers, by just word of mouth. If I'm correct, they said 600 last year and we only can take 50. We could take more, but 50 we're set at. Next year is going to be a watershed because I want an evaluation of what has happened over these four years, and see if any of our goals have been achieved.

INT: What were the goals?

AO: I did say that they should not emphasize being black, which didn't go over well. Another thing would be, that they should take interest in helping people of their own race, after they have achieved that certain position in society. I don't know if that's going to happen either. They somehow should realize that the American society should become a melting pot, which it has not been. That's a very controversial thing. I'm not against marriage between races. I don't think people are prepared for that. There' sstill that very definite

negative feeling right away. It's mainly because of society; those people are always going to be pointed out. In our church there was a couple, and I kept inviting them. They never felt really comfortable. It's unfortunate that way. I don't understand it. But then, I talked to one of the directors of a program in Roxbury. That's a wrong thing to say. You should not say "I don't understand" because you never will. There's not just one single answer or single issue, it's many backgrounds and many of those are brought together and the people feel that they really can't accept that. For instance, here in Lincoln, do you see anybody of any other race? No. I take an interest in the Goldenaires, a group of people in Roxbury who are really the backbone of the whole of society! I have had ramp installed for them so that they can go to meetings, because there are a lot of them in a wheelchair now and can't go up and down the stairs. It's at Freedom House. John wants to bring that group here to Lincoln. I think Ken has really confused John because Ken says, "I don't think Lincoln is ready for a busload of black people." I hope I get that cleared up somehow! But race is just like anything else. When I came from Europe, I might have just as well been black, because people would not accept me. Ken says it's an in-born kind of thing.

INT: I think people are afraid of difference, things they

don't understand are feared.

AO: Yes, it's like a black sheep that gets kicked out. I was shocked when some time ago my youngest granddaughter who is four and a half now, wouldn't accept anyone with black skin. So, I bought dolls that had black skin and then white ones, two families. And I made a doll, an American Indian, a quite different color. That American Indian doll just disappeared. And I said, "What happened?" And she said, "I don't like her." I asked why. "She looks ugly." I asked why. She said, "Because she does not look like you or me." I said, "But you don't have to look like you or me and still not be ugly." Then she went under a chair, and she took the doll out for me and we named her Tiger Lily. A beautiful American Indian doll. I said to Ken, "Is this born in, because the parents aren't that way. Where does it come from?"

INT: It's very strange, isn't it? You wonder is it a genetic or biological thing. But you hope you raise your children to be blind to those differences, and look at the person.

INT: When my children were growing up, I wanted to teach them non-violence, because America is a very violent country. Sometimes they would come home from school with their shirts ripped and scratches and I would ask what

happened. They would say "Such and such gang came and they just wanted to take my shirt off. Mama, it doesn't work." I'd say, "I know it's difficult, but continue, it will work. Because eventually they might not be able to figure you out, but eventually they're going to leave you alone because you won't respond, you don't hit back." I might have done a disservice to my children, but I don't think so. They are very gentle people. As a matter of fact my eldest son they call a Samaritan because he can't pass by anyone who is in trouble. He will pitch in. Anywhere, he will just do that, or give people if they need. My daughter is the toughie. She's an ordained Elder in the Presbyterian Church -- so we have to mind our language. She is doing some beautiful things. She has started a home for abandoned girls in Guatemala, in connection with the Catholic Church, and she's a Presbyterian, please. Within two weeks that house was just full of 50 girls. Then she started another one, and that is full now. She has actually a hundred girls, taken from the streets, doing something that is worthwhile. They're doing hand work, crafts and selling them and living in this good environment. Otherwise they would become prostitutes at a very early age. So perhaps, this non-violence is working in very interesting ways. I sat next to David Rockefeller at one of the dinners, and I talked to him about this. He said one of his daughters is in South America doing something like

that, sponsoring homes for children who don't have parents or who are unwanted, and she wants to be very modest about it. She doesn't want anybody to connect the Rockefeller name with that. Again, a very interesting characteristic. Perhaps the non-violence works in very interesting ways even if it doesn't work right away in practice because it is a violent world. Just look at the newspapers. It's murder, and killing. Guns. I'm against guns very much because I went through one war. The hunters in Scandinavia have guns, and more children are killed by gun accidents. But, of course, there's a limit to what you can really do about it. So with Reach, they're getting an education. They're getting a chance in life. They're getting something that no one gives them without wanting something back.

INT: Do you have relationships with any of the students? Do you know any of them? Do they write to you?

AO: I go there occasionally. I don't want to be their godmother. I don't want to be known, the marvelous one. Somebody came to me in one of the meetings and asked me why I was doing this. What is your ulterior motive? I said, "That's an interesting question, I don't have any answer for it. I'm doing it because I feel that perhaps somehow I can help people who nobody helps otherwise." Then I have mothers come to me, cry on my shoulder in

Roxbury, saying, "This is the most wonderful thing that could have happened." The fathers aren't there. That's a matriarchal society. I once was at a lecture at Harvard and I sat next to a black lady and during intermission I said to her, "We have a lot in common, you and I, because I also come from matriarchal society. The women decide very much what goes on in Scandinavia." She looked me up and down and said, "You don't know anything about us. We have nothing in common." And after intermission, she didn't sit next to me. So she had the problem; she had the problem of accepting me. I realized that. It can be that way, too. But it's not my problem.

INT: You have to overcome the notion certain people think you want to get publicity about this or be seen as the great white hope.

AO: Altruistic giving, I think, is very rare. It just does not happen. Right away, when you give you're supposed to get. That's what they don't understand, that perhaps there is someone who will do this without wanting something in kind. What they don't realize is I do want something back; I want them to go back and I want them to help, to form sort of a chain. For instance, we know a black couple in New York, very highly educated, very successful. They want nothing to do with their kind, their race, nothing at all. It's an attitude.

At the same time I don't want to emphasize it. I don't want it to become a self promotion. That just goes against my natural instinct. Same with Ken. It doesn't serve any purpose at all, that kind of thing. When I say to people, "Money can buy happiness." Right away they think that is something I get for myself. But it's not. There's no understanding at all when I say that, so I've stopped saying it, because it's an attitude.

[END OF TRANSCRIPTION].