

EPISODE 3: “Discrimination by Design” TRANSCRIPT [FINAL] w/ Citations

KACIE LUCCHINI BUTCHER: Hey, it's Kacie. If you're just starting with this episode, go back and listen to episode 1. Things will make more sense.

KLB: So you know James Baldwin, literary icon, genius reinventor of American letters?

ALEXANDRA PASQUALONE: I'm familiar, yes.

KLB: Okay, well in a 1963 *TIME* magazine profile on Baldwin, he has this quote:

“You think your pain and your heartbreak are unprecedented in the history of the world, but then you read. It was Dostoevsky and Dickens who taught me that the things that tormented me most were the very things that connected me with all the people who were alive, or who had ever been alive.”¹

And even though Baldwin was talking about art and the human condition, he could have just as easily been talking about finding a place to live in Madison. You think your renting pains, your housing struggles, are unprecedented in the history of Madison, Wisconsin, and the universe, until you read... any history book, reddit post, Instagram story, journal article, Facebook marketplace listing, group chat, local newspaper, bathroom graffiti, airplane banner...

AP: I think we get it... finding housing in Madison has always been a problem.

KLB: Yeah, but *why* is it so hard to find housing? To understand how these problems became so persistent, we need to go back to the mid-twentieth century. In the same decades that friend of the podcast James Baldwin was *expanding* the boundaries of literature in a way that would fundamentally change American cultural discourse, universities were *expanding* their student bodies and campus footprints in a way that would alter the fabric of American cities forever.

AP: Wow, that is one tortured metaphor.

KLB: Yeah, almost as torturous as finding housing in Madison, amiright?

[MUSIC]

KLB: From the Rebecca M. Blank Center for Campus History, this is *Reorientation*, a podcast exploring the history of UW–Madison you won't get on your campus welcome tour. I'm Kacie

¹ 1963 May 24, LIFE, Volume 54, Number 21, 'Doom and glory of knowing who you are' by Jane Howard, Start Page 86B, Quote Page 89, Column 1, Time Inc., Chicago, Illinois. (Google Books Full View) <https://books.google.com/books?id=mEkEAAAAMBAJ&q=unprecedented#v=snippet&q=unprecedented&f=false>

Lucchini Butcher.

AP: And I'm Alexandra Pasqualone. In episode three, we're talking about the mid-century on campus — A boom period for UW and American higher ed, when the student population soared and the housing crisis worsened in response.

[MUSIC]

KLB: To start out I want you to picture that we're in ... 1945.

AP: Alright. I'm there. World War II is ending. American troops are coming home. There are two new global super powers—the U.S. and the Soviet Union. It's the end of an austere war-time period for Americans. Consumerism is on the rise. Frank Sinatra and Bing Crosby are swingin' at the top of the music charts.

[SNIPPET OF "Somebody Loves Me" by Frank Sinatra]

AP: Red lipstick is all the rage. The first commercial Jeep was released.

[CAR HORN BEEP]

KLB: Wow, you know a lot about 1945.

AP: Yeah, it's one of my historian super powers.

KLB: Alright, then what do you know about higher ed in 1945?

[CRICKETS]

KLB: Historian power on the fritz? Need to recharge?

AP: Something like that...

KLB: Well, I'll take it from here... World War II drastically changed the landscape of higher education in the United States. First, there were more teenagers attending and graduating from high school. Combine this with the postwar GI Bill, which covered college tuition for returning soldiers... and there was unprecedented access to higher ed. Universities across the US were overwhelmed with enrollments and scrambled to accommodate those hordes of new students as the war drew to a close.² The federal government saw universities as key institutions in its Cold War arsenal. And they provided substantial funds to support the expansion of higher ed.³

² John R. Thelin, *A History of American Higher Education*, 2nd ed (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2011).

³ LaDale C. Winling, *Building the Ivory Tower: Universities and Metropolitan Development in the Twentieth Century, Politics and Culture in Modern America* (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania press, 2018).

Enrollment and research surged at UW-Madison after World War II, compounding the university's existing space constraints.⁴

AP: Wait, wasn't higher ed just for rich people?

KLB: Well... yes.

SIOBHAN RYAN: Before World War II university really was the purview of like the upper middle classes. And after World War II, it became increasingly accessible to like the middle class and working class.

KLB: If you're a fan of the podcast, you may recognize that voice. Our esteemed cohost from last season, Siobhan Ryan.

SR: I'm Siobhan. I'm a historian who researches the expansion of urban universities after World War II and the impacts that this has had on urban communities.

KLB: Everybody, welcome Siobhan back to the pod. Do we have any clapping sounds, John?

[CLAPPING SOUNDS; LAUGHTER]

SR: Oh, it's so good to be back.

KLB: We brought Siobhan back on the podcast to talk about her research on UW–Madison's expansion after World War II. It's particularly relevant because that expansion wasn't just classroom buildings and research labs. It was the way the university went about building more housing for students that ended up having one of the biggest impacts on both campus and the city.

[MUSIC]

AP: For folks who aren't familiar with UW's campus, here's a quick geography lesson that will help this story make more sense. The heart of campus sits right up against the south shore of Lake Mendota. So you can't build anything to the north. To the east are downtown and the state Capitol, so that's a no-go as well. At this point back in the 1940s, the area south of campus was just a run-of-the-mill Madison neighborhood—houses, apartments, businesses, and to the west was a bunch of land without much on it... that the university already owned.

KLB: So you're thinking to yourself, university officials obviously decided to develop west, right? Well, nope.

⁴ Cronon and Jenkins, *The University of Wisconsin: A History*, Volume IV — Renewal to Revolution, 1945–1971, 7–55.

SR: Part of the reason that they cited was that they felt developing the land to the west of the campus—this undeveloped land that the state planning board thought would be good for development — they said it would be too kind of far away from the rest of the campus. It would make the campus no longer like a walkable campus.

AP: They also nixed the idea of building taller buildings on the existing campus... partly because they were more expensive, but also... vibes.

SR: So often the people planning these post-war campus developments, do talk about the need to like, maintain this kind of bucolic campus landscape. Like, you know, one of the reasons that they, you know, universities have so much green space, that in a regular city would be instantly snapped up for development into, you know, high rises—Like they would be making the most of that space. But in a university, there's kind of this desire to create a particular landscape, which is, you know, the, what we know, what we think of as the modern university.

KLB: The idea Siobhan is talking about is so much bigger than UW-Madison and it links back to an unlikely historical figure. You need to know a little bit about Frederick Law Olmsted who may be most famous for his park designs (Central Park in New York City? Ever heard of it?)⁵ Olmsted played a prolific role in campus planning in the U.S. He had five principles that we still see today on most US campuses.

[DINGING SOUND]

AP: 1. The campus is an extension of the community in which it exists. Olmsted argued that college campuses shouldn't feel *separate* from the cities they occupy. Culturally, architecturally, design-wise, they should sort of match their environment. So a university in Wisconsin should look different than a university in California or upstate New York.⁶

[DINGING SOUND; MUSIC]

KLB: 2. Buildings should be domestic, not institutional, in scale. In essence, Olmsted believed that if universities wanted to create civically-minded citizens, they had to model living in a community by avoiding skyscrapers, large institutional buildings, and dispersed living spaces.⁷

[DINGING SOUND; MUSIC]

⁵ "Olmsted–Designed New York City Parks," New York City Government Parks Learning Hub, <https://www.nycgovparks.org/about/history/olmsted-parks>

⁶ David Schuyler, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design," *Planning For Higher Education*, Volume 25 Number 2, Winter 1996-1997.

⁷ Schuyler, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design"

AP: 3. Student dwellings should approximate those they will inhabit in later life. This may sound odd to anyone who knows universities today... but Olmsted *hated* dormitories. He referred to them as “common barns or barracks.” He argued that the university shouldn’t aim to house students as cheaply as possible... but in a way that would have a positive impact on their character, tastes, and inclinations. While dorms still reign supreme on university campuses, many universities after WWII added more “domestic” living options including small apartments and houses.⁸

[DINGING SOUND; MUSIC]

KLB: 4. The quadrangle—or the quad— is too inflexible a design. Olmsted saw a future in which students and universities would change and he worried that rigid, rectangular “quads” limited the universities' ability to adapt to future students.⁹

[DINGING SOUND; MUSIC]

AP: 5. The campus—landscape and buildings—are a part of the civilizing mission of higher education. Olmsted believed design shaped the experiences, tastes, and habits of students. And that would then continue later in their life. He believed the universities' design should reflect the culture of a liberal education which focused on a connection with nature, a connection with community, and a civically-minded “democratizing” control of the landscape.¹⁰

KLB: In many ways, the UW-Madison of the pre-World War II period adhered really closely to Olmsted’s principles. Students lived in relatively small dormitories, with each building having a community feel. Many students lived in the neighborhoods surrounding the university with Madison residents who may or may not have had any connection to the university.¹¹ But all that changed as the campus population boomed and UW looked to expand housing for students.

SR: In 1946, the UW Regents made a, passed a resolution that they would expand south of University Avenue.¹² They identified 20 blocks south of University Avenue for expansion, and that was like a really pivotal moment in UW Madison's planning history because prior to that, the only land owned by the university, pretty much south of University Avenue, was Camp Randall. So in identifying those 20 blocks south of University Avenue for expansion—for future expansion—I argued that the regents sort of condemned the neighborhood from that point on.¹³

⁸ Schuyler, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design"

⁹ Schuyler, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design"

¹⁰ Schuyler, "Frederick Law Olmsted and the Origins of Modern Campus Design"

¹¹ For more on the early history of UW–Madison, we recommend Cronon, Edmund David, and John W. Jenkins. *The University of Wisconsin: A History*. Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1999.

¹² University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, “Memorandum: The Reasons for the Decision to Expand the University Campus,” January 16, 1950, UW Archives.

¹³ Department of University Planning and Construction, “The Sketch Plan for the University of Wisconsin at Madison: A First Progress Report on the Development of a General Campus Plan,” December 1958,

AP: Like we said, this area south of campus was far from empty. It was an intergenerational, mixed-residential neighborhood. It housed students, but also Madison community members. It included single-family and multi-family homes. It had a grocery store, bars, and other local businesses. But all of that began to change with the Regent resolution.

SR: After the Regents made that resolution, they sent out a communication to property owners in the area that they had designated for future expansion, saying, we're gonna buy your properties in the next however many years, so don't bother renovating because we're gonna buy your house in the next 10, 15 years and demolish it. And if you were already considering selling, we wanna be the first, we wanna have the first kind of, right of refusal on that, or not right of refusal because they wanted to buy all of the properties in the area.¹⁴ So, even then when the university's acquisitions did pause in between 1950 and about 1959/60, the property owners in the area had no incentive to renovate their homes.¹⁵ And they also like, people like reg— like long-term residents in the area started to realize that this neighborhood had been identified for university expansion, and eventually would become part of the university even if that obviously didn't happen overnight. And so people started to leave.

KLB: It would take decades for the university to acquire all the land and houses to begin their extensive expansion. But to be clear the university did eventually acquire the land and begin constructing multiple dormitories and other university buildings.

[MUSIC]

SR: I think what really struck me about the construction of the Southeast dormitories, and the, you know, demolition of several blocks of regular housing for this part of the university's expansion is that only about half of the people who lived there were university students or university affiliates. And so although the project increased the availability of housing in those blocks, like, you know, the, the number of apartments greatly increased by constructing the southeast dormitories. The apartments that were built were only available to students. And so that creates a situation where non-student, non university affiliates of Madison get pushed further out from the university. And in the case of Madison, the university is basically downtown. Like, so getting pushed further away from the university gets—means getting pushed further away from downtown.

AP: The construction of the Southeast Dormitories and broader South Campus expansion pitted the Madison community against the ideal of expanding access to higher education. By 1979,

Board of Regents' meeting records, 1850–1971, Series 1/1/3, Box 85, Regular Board February 7, 1959, Document 1365, UW Archives.

¹⁴ “A Summary of Campus Planning: The University of Wisconsin, 1850 to 1954,” n.d., Historical Maps Relating to Campus Development maps, 1850-1956, UA2023/017, Box 5, Folder 1, UW Archives, Madison, Wisconsin; Baker et al., *South Campus Neighborhood Study*, 2.

¹⁵ University of Wisconsin Board of Regents, “Memorandum: The Reasons for the Decision to Expand the University Campus [January 16, 1950],” 2; Baker et al., *South Campus Neighborhood Study*.

South Campus was essentially a UW-Madison neighborhood. The 1970 Census shows that the area was 96 percent renter-occupied, with three quarters of residents between 18 and 24 years old.¹⁶ It was a dramatic transformation from the mixed population of renters, owner-occupiers, workers, families, and students who lived in the area in the 1940s and who gave the community a sense of identity separate from the university.

KL B: You might be thinking... “Okay, so some locals lose out. But students must win, right? The university has a responsibility to prioritize their students and with the completion of dorm construction, they did. They ensured students had housing.” Well, yes and no.

AP: The boom in student population after World War II happened *rapidly*. But unlike the massive high-rises today that seem to pop-up overnight, construction took a long time. UW–Madison opened the last of the four Southeast Dormitories in 1965—almost 20 years after the large enrollment booms post-WWII.

KL B: So what did students do in those interim decades? They did what students do now—searched far and wide for housing. But there was a major difference. The rental market prior to the passage of the 1968 Fair Housing Act was rife with religious discrimination and racism that was entirely legal. So while some students struggled against the usual housing issues in Madison—high rents, limited availability, unsafe living conditions—other students had even larger hurdles to surpass and even fewer housing options.

[MUSIC]

[OLD TIMEY VOICE]

*The Front page of the Daily Cardinal October 21, 1955.
“Is Housing Bureau Lax on Discrimination?”*

“Discrimination is widespread. Mike Armin of the Wisconsin Student Association Human Relations committee phoned 32 housing bureau-listed landlords, told them he was a Negro and asked for a room. Of the 32 called, 22 turned him down specifically because of his race... One told Armin, “The Housing Bureau knows we don’t take Negroes; why do they keep sending you people around?”

Carol Armin investigated Women’s housing in the same way and found much the same results; 18 out of 27 houses called definitely discriminated and only four definitely did not discriminate.”¹⁷

¹⁶ Baker et al., *South Campus Neighborhood Study*, 13.

¹⁷ “Is Housing Bureau Lax on Discrimination?”, *Daily Cardinal*, October 21, 1955. UW Archives.

AP: Wait—what’s the Housing Bureau? And why do they know about discrimination but do nothing about it?

KLB: Yeah, I suppose that’s an important point to address. The university knew they couldn’t house all the students enrolling after World War II. But this idea called “in loco parentis” hadn’t quite died yet...

AP: In loco parentis? Is this a Latin podcast now?

KLB: Sadly... yes. But only briefly. So, bear with me!

[TANGENT MUSIC]

KLB: “In Loco Parentis” is a sort of doctrine or guiding principle for higher education in the early 20th century. It translates to “in the place of the parent” and essentially it was the idea that universities and university leaders were acting in the role of parents for students when they were away at college.¹⁸ In practice, it meant the university had a larger role in controlling students' lives. At UW the idea might be most absurdly exemplified by something called the “rocking chair incident.”

[OMINOUS SOUNDS]

KLB: In 1929, Dean Scott Goodnight decided to take action for what he thought was a plague of moral abandon and licentiousness among the student body. Learning that an unchaperoned couple were alone in a Sterling Court apartment, Goodnight seated himself in a rocking chair outside, waiting for the couple to emerge, but their patience outlasted his. The young man and woman went un-apprehended for their tryst. The affair was called “the rocking chair incident” and Goodnight earned students’ derision for years to come.¹⁹

AP: Oh my gosh. Can you imagine Chancellor Mnookin going to a dorm and sitting outside of a student’s room to stop them from making out?

KLB: No... and honestly, if there is one historic trend I’m happy that has died it’s being concerned about what our students are doing with each other behind closed doors. Because... yuck.

KLB: BUT all of this to say that university leaders were *deeply* involved in students' lives. And that extended to housing. Knowing that the university couldn’t possibly house all the students in the dormitories, they created the Housing Bureau—an office dedicated to helping students find

¹⁸ Phillip Lee, “The Curious Life of In Loco Parentis at American Universities,” Harvard University, accessed at https://scholar.harvard.edu/files/philip_lee/files/vol8lee.pdf

¹⁹ <https://www.tumblr.com/uwmadarchives/118708431334/ghosts-of-campus-expansion-sterling-court>

housing in Madison. The most important thing they provided was a list of university-approved landlords. The list ensured that landlords met two main requirements: one, that they segregated their living facility by gender (can't have all of that licentiousness) and two, that they met building code standards.²⁰

AP: Let me guess? The landlords were allowed to discriminate.

[DING DING DING]

KLB: Correct! It was totally legal and the university didn't seem to care. But students did. Starting in the 1940s they fought back against discrimination and the focus of organizers was the list of university-approved private landlords. Students didn't challenge the university's position that landlords had the legal right to discriminate. However, they argued that landlords did not have the right to be listed by the university. The university made the list... so they could technically make the requirements anything they wanted.²¹

AP: Wait, wait... I know where this is going. The university ignored the students and just kept letting landlords discriminate.

[DING DING DING]

KLB: Wow, you're really good at this. Yeah... the university just kind of worked around the issue. They released statements saying they didn't support discrimination. They said they wanted *ALL* students to feel welcome. They said there was absolutely nothing they could do.²²

AP: Sounds, uhh... familiar.

KLB: ... umm, yeah. But that's how we get newspaper articles like the one from 1955 where students are doing investigations into the Housing Bureau list and realizing how bad it is for students of color. And there are plenty of real world stories in the newspapers too.

[MUSIC]

²⁰ Report of the Student Board Committee Against Discrimination, May 1949, Dean of Student Affairs Kenneth Little subject files, "Discrimination - E" Series, 19/2/3-4, Box 5, "Student Board, Faculty, Regent Documents on Discrimination" Folder, UW Archives.

²¹ Report of the Student Board Committee Against Discrimination, May 1949.

²² Statement from Director of University Housing on University Committee's Majority Report on Human Rights for Students (Document 933), January 30, 1950, Chancellor's Miscellaneous files, General Subject Files – Discrimination, Series 4/0/3, Box 25 Loose papers, UW Archives. Letter from Board of Regents Secretary Clarke Smith to President E.B. Fred, November 17, 1950, December 5, 1950, Chancellors General Correspondence 1950-1951 Committees, Series 4/16/1, Box 145, Committee on Human Rights Folder, UW Archives.

AP: In 1940, Tremetria Birth, a Black graduate student in the English department, was evicted from her rooming house after her landlord stated, “I don’t believe that colored and white people should mix, especially on State Street.”²³

AP: In 1944, graduate student Arthur Burke was asked to leave his room at the University Club because of “strong sentiment among club members against negro residents.”²⁴ And it affected faculty and staff too. Carson Gulley, a famous UW–Madison chef, had such a hard time finding housing, the university made him an apartment on campus so he wouldn’t leave Wisconsin.²⁵

KLB: And it wasn’t just race. It was also religious discrimination. In September 1929, Mildred Gordon, a Jewish woman, arrived at the private Langdon Hall dormitory. But upon her arrival, her landlord informed her that there was no longer a room for her. A gentile, a non-Jewish person, had taken her place. Gordon “considered it an insult” and sued the dormitory owners for breach of contract. Eventually, she received an undisclosed settlement from the management company.²⁶

AP: So you can’t get in the dorms (because they don’t exist yet) and then you’re forced onto a private housing market that sucks on a good day but is even worse if you’re not white. How did anyone find housing?

KLB: I want to answer that... but we need to talk about one more thing...

AP: Is it good news?

KLB: No...

AP: Dear god... okay... fine. Go on.

KLB: A lot of the stories we talked about before, people like Tremetria and Arthur... one thing we didn’t mention was that they weren’t from Wisconsin. And beyond race and religion, the housing deck was also stacked against out-of-state students. A Wisconsin state law mandated that the university give preferential treatment to in-state students when filling dormitories. So when the university finally did have more dorms, they were forced to prioritize Wisconsin residents. In one controversial case in the early 1960s, the university even reneged on hundreds of out-of-state and international students who already lived in the dorms after more

²³ “Negro Co-Ed Says Other Tenants Caused Ouster.” *Wisconsin State Journal*, Apr. 26, 1940.

²⁴ “University Club Ousts Colored Grad Student.” *Daily Cardinal* (Madison, WI), Oct. 24, 1944, UW–Madison Archives, UW–Madison Libraries.

²⁵ Scott Seyforth, “The Life and Times of Carson Gulley.” *Wisconsin Magazine of History* vol. 99, no. 4 (Spring 2016).

²⁶ “Jewess, Denied Room, Sues.” *Capital Times* (Madison, WI), Jan. 10, 1930; Pollack, Jonathan Z.S. Wisconsin, *The New Home of the Jew 150 Years of Jewish Life at the University of Wisconsin–Madison* (PDF), Self-published, 2019.

in-state students applied.²⁷ The university vowed to “make every effort” to help these students find housing but most were forced to find it on the private market.

KLB: While the policy was implemented to support Wisconsin students, in practice it punished students of color and Jewish students, most of whom were not in-state residents due to the overwhelmingly white and Christian population of the state.

AP: Soooooo you can't get in the dorms—first because they don't exist, and then because you're not from Wisconsin. So, then you're forced onto a private housing market that sucks on a good day but is even worse if you're not white. Again—*HOW* did anyone find housing?

KLB: well... [SILENCE]

AP: I don't like the silence.

KLB: You shouldn't. The uncomfortable answer is that some students couldn't find housing and because of that, they ultimately left the university. If you have nowhere to live, how can you attend classes? It's a pretty simple equation. You can't. It's hard to quantify exactly how many students left the university because of their inability to find housing but we know students did. Remember, Tremetria?

AP: Tremetria's story got a lot of attention in the local press. Probably because of this iconic line where she said, “The U.S. sits back smugly and condemns fascism but practices the worst kind of discrimination at home.” An aside: *The Wisconsin State Journal* categorized her rightful frustration as quote: “complaining.”²⁸ Once evicted, Tremetria immediately left Madison and returned to Chicago. The university called the case the “first of its kind” and promised “some kind of action.”²⁹

KLB: But as we discussed, the university *chose* not to act. Repeatedly. But why? The answer is as simple as it is craven—university officials worried that if they cracked down hard on the landlords who discriminated by threatening to take them off the approved lists, the landlords would just let themselves be removed. The university believed that landlords would choose their prejudice over rent money. And if the Housing Bureau lists got shorter, that would mean less housing for white students.

[MUSIC]

²⁷ Newspaper Clipping, “Halls Policy Set for UW; Some 600 Out of State Student Will Have to Move Out,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, February 28 1961. University General *Milwaukee Journal* Clippings, “Education – Observatory,” 1922-1977 Series 0/5/15 Box 2, UW Archives.

²⁸ “Negro Co-ed Still Lashed, She Complains,” *Wisconsin State Journal*, May 24, 1940.

²⁹ “Dean Nardin Under Fire of UW Regents,” *The Wisconsin State Journal*, June 21, 1930, accessed at <https://newspaperarchive.com/madison-wisconsin-state-journal-jun-21-1930-p-1/>

KLB: In the end, the university *chose* to ensure white students continued to have plenty of housing to choose from while Jewish students and students of color were forced to struggle in Madison's housing market.³⁰

AP: But that doesn't mean students just took these circumstances lying down. Faced with discrimination, high prices, and space shortages over decades, students organized. For well over 20 years, they fought to make housing accessible and affordable. When university leaders failed to make changes, organizers got creative. They carved out alternative living arrangements for themselves to meet their needs and build community. That's next time on *Reorientation*.

[MUSIC]

NAMA PANDEY: You can find a full teaching guide for this episode on our website at [campus history dot wisc dot E-D-U](http://campus.historydotwiscdotE-D-U). That includes a link to the research Siobhan did on UW's dorm expansion.

Reorientation is written by Kacie Lucchini Butcher, Alexandra Pasqualone, Nama Pandey, Taylor Dickson, and John K. Wilson. He also produced and edited this episode.

Additional help from Taylor Bailey and Dan Berman.

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³⁰ Form Letter to Landlords who withdrew from listing rooms via the Housing Bureau, February 19 1954. Dean of Men's Records, Kenneth Little subject files "H-Intra," Series 19/2/3-4, Box 7, "Human Rights" Folder, UW Archives; "Private Dormitory Rave Queries Hit," Daily Cardinal, October 18 1954, UW Archives.