From a young age, Rex Kellums was imprinted with the power of a strong community, and he spent his career at Colorado State University trying to foster that as a student housing coordinator and vice president in the student affairs office.

Born May 19th, 1938, Rex grew up a farm boy in Wyoming and Nebraska, doing chores, going to school, and enjoying his community. “You felt that you had a responsibility to them,” he explains about the people that populated his childhood. “And they loved you, which made the responsibility easy to bear … It was a wonderful way to be raised.” His father sold the farm eventually, which he considers a favor, because it freed him up to pursue his education, something both of his parents greatly supported.

He came to Colorado State University in “1956, when it was still Colorado A&M” to get a Bachelor’s degree in agribusiness. Tuition was only $125 a quarter back then. He went through the ROTC program at CSU and worked as a student assistant in the residence halls. About that experience, he says, “I think that was one of the things that shaped who I am today … in terms of working with young people, and being a peer leader on the floor.” In fact, the experience would significantly shape his career choice a few years later.

After traveling from base to base in the Army for a few years and getting married, Kellums decided to return. “I’d never been in a place I enjoyed more than Fort Collins.” He pursued a Master’s degree, or as he puts it, a union card to working in universities, in education and student personnel. Influenced by his time as a housing assistant, he knew he wanted to be involved in the auxiliaries, or “all those activities on campus that are not academic – housing, food service, student center, bookstore, health service, student recreation, etc.” He worked as a head resident in a dormitory while studying for his Master’s and was offered a position at the university before he even finished.

As an administrator in student housing, he has a unique perspective on the “problem, challenge, and opportunity” that’s involved in sharing a dorm room. On one hand, it’s economic. Of course, a university can’t afford to house each student individually. On the other, he explains that “it grows a student to learn to get along with others like that. I’m sure it does.” He dedicated much of his career to providing the facilities and atmosphere for such growth to take place.

Rex worked three years as the coordinator of family housing and then moved into other administrative work along with continued interest in housing, running the orientation program called Preview CSU and serving as an assistant dean in the student affairs office. He dealt with expanding the housing operation and keeping the budgets “at a point where we could operate and be affordable to students.” He also had to deal with troublesome students and parents as he attempted to foster the same strong sense of community that he remembers growing up. “I’d like to think that I worked with the finest people that a person could have put together,” he gushes about his coworkers. “And the students that we drew at CSU were really, really, a good bunch of students … They were challenging and enjoyable at the same time.”

While he worries about the state of social connectedness in young people today, he emphasizes the important philosophy that has guided his life: “the people who continue to serve their fellow man in the community … are probably the happiest.” His life has shown the mantra to be true.