

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ERNEST KOVACS

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

WILLIAM BUIE

and

SAMANTHA MALISE

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

FEBRUARY 4, 2016

TRANSCRIPT BY

JESSE BRADDELL

William Buie: This begins an interview on February 4, 2016 with William Buie.

Ernest Kovacs: Ernest "Bub" Kovacs.

Samantha Malise: Samantha Malise.

WB: At Rutgers University, New Brunswick, New Jersey. To begin, can you tell me when you were born?

EK: January 28, 1951.

WB: Where were you raised?

EK: I was raised here in New Brunswick. I was born at what was then Middlesex General Hospital, now Robert Wood Johnson, and we lived adjacent to the hospital on Division Street.

WB: What are your parents' names?

EK: Ernest Senior and Evelyn. My parents are also Brunswick people. They were born here. There's some interesting stories. It's a mixed marriage, at least the old mixed marriage, as in my mother was German Irish and lived on the other side of town and my dad was straight Hungarian. It was a tenuous change for its time. My mother was raised Roman Catholic on that side of town, which was heavily Roman Catholic at that time. It was a town that was organized around ethnicity and race. The ethnicity was the Sixth Ward was Irish, the Fifth Ward was Hungarian, the Second Ward, First Ward were more Italian and German. You were tied to not only your ethnicity, but you were tied to your religion. As you can see, as you walk around town even now, you can see the vestiges of these old churches, some of which still have congregations and some of them don't. Some of them go back hundreds of years. One right adjacent here, the Second Reformed Church goes all the ways back to the Dutch Reformed, the Dutch who settled this area and the seminary across the street, the New Brunswick Theological Seminary. That's how we grew up.

WB: Did your mother or father share with you any stories about their particular communities growing up?

EK: Yeah. I think since I grew up in the Hungarian side of the family, the discourse was much more about Hungarians and so forth. My grandparents, particularly on that side of the family, the Hungarian side, were both born in Hungary, came here perhaps legally. My grandfather died fairly early. In the '30s, he worked for public service. Before the heavy equipment, they would dig gas lines. My grandmother and grandfather, they shared in the family business, and the family business at the time was, and still is in some ways, my family's had a maybe seventy-year, eighty-year tradition of being sextons for churches. My grandmother was able to cobble together a living, getting free housing, by essentially being the sexton for the Magyar Reformed Church, which is still there at the intersection of Division and Somerset Street. My father inherited the

job, so we grew up living right there. My parents subsequently purchased a home, but we grew up right there next to the church. My life was intimately tied to [laughter] Hungarian food, drama, culture as it relates to at least most of the churches in that area.

My father had an interesting story. He was born here in 1911. In July of 1914, my dad and his mother went back to visit her family in Hungary, and they were going to stay a month. In August of '14, there was this thing that happened called World War I. It happened pretty rapidly with sides taking place and so forth, so they got stuck there. Their passports were confiscated, and they lived in Hungary through 1921. [Editor's Note: On June 28, 1914, Serbian nationalist Gavrilo Princip assassinated the heir to the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Archduke Franz Ferdinand, and his wife in Sarajevo, Bosnia. A month later, Austria-Hungary declared war on Serbia, and within a week, existing military alliances took effect, sparking the start of World War I in Europe. The war lasted until November 1918.] They couldn't get out and they stayed there. Then, they went to the embassy. Of course, my grandfather here is trying to say, "My family's over there." "Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah." "It's my wife." "Yeah, yeah, good luck on that one." "We need to get them back." Even after the war, it took three years for them to come back. My dad was, at that point, ten years old when he came back and certainly could not speak English. My grandmother never spoke English. My grandfather never spoke English. They never did, I mean, their entire lives. There's still some people here in New Brunswick who are Hungarian who still do not speak English, [laughter] because you can get away with it. You can get away with it. Why would you need to? It was a very interesting thing.

He came back. He was semi-schooled in Hungary, then came back here, moved in on Division Street, where my grandfather was and my grandmother then, and they subsequently had two other children. My aunts, one of which is still alive, and my dad of course went to Lincoln School. You know, he couldn't speak English. He's eleven years old, ten years old. That lasted for about a day. He then went into the family business, cleaning. He worked for initially Lefkowitz Leather, which was down on the river. It was still there when I was growing up. It was a leather processing plant where the effluent went right into the river. [laughter] Then, [he] worked for thirty-some years for Bond Clothes, which was on Remsen Avenue. Then, of course, he had this other part-time gig with my mother being the custodians for this church. Then, they'd sublet us out, and we would do office buildings and do snow removal for Saint Ladislaus, which is adjacent, and the High Street Baptists, which is no longer there, and the Mount Zion A.M.E., which was adjacent at the time. They've now moved. We did some of the heavy lift when it snowed and things like that. That side of the family's story, you'll hear more of it.

WB: If I could just ask one question.

EK: Sure.

WB: What are your grandparents' names?

EK: On that side, it's K-A-R-O-L-I, Karoli, which is really Charles.

WB: Okay.

EK: And Elizabeth, originally Bessenyei, and then Kovacs. On my mother's side of the family, they were slightly earlier arrivals. They were more of the 1870s, the bad times in Germany, bad times in Ireland, kind of show up here in the post-Civil War earlier migration, so my great grandparents came over. Both of my grandparents on that side of the family were born here in New Brunswick. Their names are ironically Carl Bahr, B-A-H-R, and Helen Keller Bahr, and they were up near Douglass [College]. They lived on Delavan Street, near the horse shoe streets and water filtration plant area. They were members of Sacred Heart Church at the time, which was pretty heavily German. My grandmother, for her entire life, was a maid over at Douglass and-or here, working for housing, residence life, so they cleaned the bathrooms. My brother and I like to say it's the family business on both sides of the family in a way, [laughter] which I'll get to in a little while. That's that side of the family.

My grandfather Carl was a World War I vet. He was wounded a couple of times. In fact, I have his Purple Hearts. He was [in] the Lightning Division, 78th Division, gassed and under the disabled veterans act became a police officer in New Brunswick. A quick little story. He got hired as a police officer, was a police officer for thirty-some years in New Brunswick [and] never had a driver's license. [laughter] You have to imagine this town without much vehicular traffic. [There were] lots of bus lines that people took. None of my grandparents had driver's licenses. My mother didn't have a driver's license. My aunt, who's in her nineties, doesn't have a driver's license. Nobody had driver's licenses. Nobody had cars. That's why the houses don't have [garages], like where's the garage? Where's the driveway? Because it was walking. You'd be able to walk to work, take the bus to work. The perimeter, even when I was growing up, Somerset, Franklin, East Brunswick, North Brunswick, [was] pretty much farmland. There wasn't much density there. That's the family.

I have a brother Carl, who's a little bit older than me, and a network of cousins, aunts, uncles that all grew up in and around New Brunswick. My grandfather was a police officer. My grandmother was a maid, [which] we would now call a building maintenance worker, whatever the civil service title is. We were heavily integrated both in the fabric of the Hungarian community but frankly the Rutgers community because my dad was always a volunteer usher at the basketball games, football games. I went to Rutgers football and basketball from the time I was able to walk and until I got to college. I never had to pay, because I would make sure the police officers would say, "[Okay]." That was before campus police, so it was certainly a different time. That's the story on my family.

Our daily routine around our family was that we were always tied to doing church tasks. There was always a church service. [We would] open up the buildings, turn on the heat, whether it'd be a wedding, a funeral. The school building would be oftentimes rented to Saint Peter's High School or Saint Peter's School, they would use it as classroom buildings. For a while, the hospital was using it for in-service training and so forth. It was an active revenue generator. Our family was always tied to having to go open things, clean things up, take things down, set things up. As late as my senior year in college, I was still doing funerals and weddings, bells, [laughter]

move flowers, do things like that. I went to, this is way before the days of preschool, so I went to kindergarten at Lincoln School and would walk from Division Street.

I don't think it's more than a ten-minute walk, probably shorter than that. I went to Lincoln School k through six, walk on your own, pick up people along the way. By the time you got to school, there'd be a group of eight or ten or twelve people. There was nobody dropping you off, nobody picking you up, and no buses. It wasn't this nervousness, although it wasn't terribly safe down there frankly. It was not. I don't want to be romantic about this. My grandfather was a police officer, so he would not make it romantic. He was very clear, even back then, "You see that guy there? If he comes up to you, you let me know, you run away." This is not a new discourse. The school here was a mixed school. It was a very interesting school in that it was the bridge school between the Fifth and Sixth Wards.

You had the children who were affiliated in what I would call the Saint Peter's community, Saint Peter's Hospital community, that group of people, through here, this area and Hungarians, and they went to the Lincoln School. Some of the Hungarians went to Washington School. It was a delightful place to be. Not only was it mixed with two different wards of town, Camp Kilmer was still active, so we were the receiving school for the Army kids. [Editor's Note: Camp Kilmer was an Army base in Piscataway that opened in 1942 as an embarkation base to process soldiers being sent to Europe during World War II. The base closed in 2009.] I still have a few friends that I made who were Army kids who moved around who went to Lincoln School. The Army buses would show up [laughter] every morning. [They were] the only buses that would show up. They weren't commuting kids; they were bringing the kids over from Camp Kilmer. Those students, some of them were short timers and some of them were more long term. The children of enlisted personnel were more likely to be transient, stick around a year or two. Those who were the children of NCOs [non-commissioned officers] and officers were more likely to be around for more years. Then, some of them would get mustered out, retire, and they'd end up living in the area, taking jobs and living in the area. It was an interesting time.

We'd walk to school. We would bike to school later. There were no leashes is a fair statement. You checked in at home when school let out, and then you just had to be back by dinner. For some of us, Rutgers was our playground. When some buildings were being built, you know, we were in and around them. If this Hillel was going up right now when I was a kid, we would be in there at night. We would play in them. When Alexander Library was under construction, for example, or Tinsley or Mettler or those buildings, we were just all over them. [Editor's Note: The sounds of construction trucks can be heard in the background during this interview. The new Rutgers Hillel is located at 70 College Avenue. Alexander Library was built in 1956. Tinsley Hall and Mettler Hall were built in 1962.]

On and off, depending on where my grandmother got assigned, I would go hang with my grandmother, who was typically in one like Ford Hall. She worked in Ford for a while, which I don't know if it's still a residence hall. I think it is. [Ford Hall is] right across the street here, at the corner of [Seminary Place], the street that goes by Willie the Silent. [Editor's Note: Ford Hall is a residence hall that was built in 1915. William the Silent is a statue of William I, Count

of Nassau, Prince of Orange that was erected on Voorhees Mall in 1928.] Anyway, we would come down after school and get into all the buildings and hang out and just be around, particularly if my mother had something to do associated with the church, an event or something that needed her attention, "Well, go hang out with your grandmother." So, I would just come down here.

I'm sure I can't get arrested now, but I would eat meals in the cafeterias. There wasn't a fraternity that I wasn't in and out of. When I was a kid, I had my first Rutgers ID when I was fourteen. I just stood in line when all the freshman were here [laughter] to take the picture. [laughter] This was a different place, too. It was small. It was a very small place. I think what's most interesting about growing up here, for me, I like to call it the gift of geography, because there's not a snowball's chance in hell I would've gone to college if I wasn't here, really. I'm not saying my parents or my grandparents didn't value education, but they didn't know what they didn't know. Because I spent so much time on the college campus, I wasn't fearful of, "Gee, what's going to happen when you go to college?" There was not this [fear]. I'd pick up stuff. I'd pick up the blue books and I'd see what people were doing and I'd say, "I could do that." It's the gift of geography, so I realized it wasn't going to be that difficult to go to college. It really is the gift of geography and maybe a grandmother hanging out here and going to athletic events and concerts.

There was a TV show in the '60s called *Hootenanny*. There was a guy on TV called Art Linkletter who ran a TV show forever in the '50s, '60s. His son had this show, travelling show, they'd go from college campus [to campus] and it would be folk music. I remember going to, over here by Brett [Hall], the residence hall, there's a quad there near Clothier [Hall], (Mansfield Quad?). They had an open show there, and it was live broadcast. There I am. I didn't have a ticket, got in. [laughter] It was a place that I transitioned to very easily. [Editor's Note: From 1963 to 1964, ABC aired the weekly musical variety show *Hootenanny*, which was hosted by Jack Linkletter.]

Let's see, I then went to what was then Roosevelt Junior High School on Livingston Avenue. Let me beat up on public schools just a moment. It was arguably a shock, because here I had this pretty good grammar school with loving, caring teachers and pretty much knew everybody and we were on split shifts because there was too many students in the system. We would go to school at seven a.m., go to noon, and then the older students would go from twelve-fifteen to four-thirty, something like that. I was eleven years old, and of course there would be kids as old as sixteen in seventh grade, eighth grade. How can I put this nicely? It was a pretty terrorizing environment. The rule is you would never go to the bathroom. You'd never walk home alone. You're going to get jumped. [laughter] It was a pretty awful place. This is the early '60s. It was pretty awful. I remember this one gang. The family's name was Firestone, Hank Firestone, and they lived somewhere on Somerset Street. I have no idea what happened to them. They would just be predators on young kids for money and lunches and everything else. It was pretty terrifying for a younger kid, a pretty terrifying experience. I would say at that stage, for me, the anchor in my life was right here at this church and where McKinney Hall is, that was a church

before it was the music building. [Editor's Note: McKinney Hall was acquired by Rutgers in 1962. It is located at 125 Hamilton Street.]

A sort of affordable thing for my parents was being a Boy Scout, so a good deal of that period of my life was involved in after-school activity that might be associated with Boy Scouts. I ran to it, because you would have structured afternoon things and trips and so forth. I'm going to say, it's hard to believe, but I'm going to go back to my grammar school just for a moment. I reflect back on, not only the quality of the learning, but we had dramatically good experiences.

At that grammar school, two or three times a year, you would be going to New York City with the school, really. We would go to New York City, the museums, the Museum of Natural History, the Met [Metropolitan Museum of Art]. We would go to theater, shows. We would go to Philadelphia. I remember, as a kid, going out of Lincoln School, we went to the Franklin Institute, the Philadelphia Art Museum. I have to applaud them. There wasn't a historic site in New Jersey that that grammar school didn't go to. We would go to places like Washington's Crossing, Monmouth Battlefield, Jockey Hollow at Morristown, the Revolutionary winter encampment. We would go to the rehabilitated Delaware and Raritan Canal walk system that was being rehabbed from Trenton to New Brunswick. These are just examples. They took us to Mettler's Woods, which was the only old growth, I remember this stuff, the only old-growth forest in New Jersey. [We were] constantly going over to the College Farm as a day trip, and you'd go to the College Farm and see the pigs and the cows. That was just across town. [These were] what I would consider to be engaging kinds of activity.

I think reasonably this was solidly middle class, but it wasn't like there were a lot of hovering parents who were college educated organizing this stuff. It was just part of the routine. I do appreciate, in retrospect, the quality of that experience. [There were] constant walks over to Alexander Library, over to Geology Hall, where the mastodons are. I don't even know if they're still there. Right next to Old Queen's, there was a museum there for the longest time. [Editor's Note: Old Queen's and Geology Hall are on the Old Queen's Campus. Geology Hall houses the Rutgers Geology Museum, which has on display a ten-thousand-year-old mastodon.] [We would go] down to J&J [Johnson & Johnson] to see how they do research and science. You would just literally walk, because the J&J headquarters down here back in the '50s was really their research labs, the periphery stuff. It was not just a corporate headquarters; it was manufacturing and research. We went there. We went over to Squibb. We would see the research, and we'd have the opportunity to go into the research labs. I'm trying to think of some of the other trips. Mack Trucks used to be built in New Brunswick on Jersey Avenue. Did I say Bristol-Myers Squibb? It was just Squibb back then.

There was music lessons. I learned how to play instruments there. There were plays. It was a very vibrant school. Oh, the other thing, we were constantly experimented on for the Graduate School of Education. We were tested more than anybody else in the world. We had to have been. There was always some guy, it was never women, but it was always some guy coming in and doing some sort of test on you, memory tests, what I now know to be an aggression machine, the old test of the student and the learner, and are you willing to shock a person to learn?

[Editor's Note: During the 1960s, psychologist Stanley Milgram conducted experiments to study the obedience shown to people in positions of authority.] I remember doing that in the late '50s as a grammar school student, and there wasn't any waivers.

It's interesting. I'm sure there's databases all over the place, except there's no databases, it's just paper somewhere, that has these little, "Gee, let's just use the grammar school over here. I've got an idea. I wonder if kids, if they dress in red, they'll learn better." [laughter] How could that not be true if you've got a college in the Graduate School of Education and you're the closest school? Then, I went through Roosevelt Junior High School. I was placed in what was then, there was a very clear tracking system, college track. They didn't call it that. They didn't call it Soaring Eagles and Red Robins and Buzzards, but it was. [laughter] I was fortunate enough to at least have exposure to language, four languages, advanced math and so forth. Also, [I] was able to participate in co-curricular activities, particularly band and some kind of a spinoff of what had previously been dramatics.

My ninth grade year, they reconfigured the school district, and then what was the old high school became the Chet Redshaw School maybe junior high school or middle school, what [was] the old high school on Livingston Avenue. I was there for a year, my freshman year there, and that was in ninth grade. It was a smart move, because I think they saw the predator stuff going on with the older students. I mean, it was awful. It was awful. Then, I made the transition to what was then the new high school, which is now a middle school up on Livingston Avenue. I went to that school. It was pretty much a regional school then, so you had students there from Milltown, North Brunswick, pieces of East Brunswick, sometimes Franklin. It was large. It was relatively large. My graduating class was six or seven hundred. [I] took college prep courses, language, math, sciences. You'd begin to see, particularly the more affluent kids who were from North Brunswick and Milltown, whose parents were more likely to be college educated, who went to college, you saw that their aspirational stuff was further up the ladder. It was pretty clear to me, I understood how college worked, but I didn't quite understand the entire college game and how that would work.

The thought about going away to college was just not in the cards. It was not going to be a financial possibility or at least I limited myself, because I didn't know what I didn't know. I would tell myself now, "Gee, you really do have to fill out those financial aid forms." I mostly hung with people who were likely to go to college, which had a pretty good peer influence on the rest of my life, even though I grew up with many of these kids. Having said that, it's not like a huge percentage of my high school graduating class went to college. I would say that at best was more like a third at the most, and that might even be a high number. I was trying to reflect on that, how many actually went to college, and I couldn't find my high school yearbook to really look at that. It wasn't as high a number as you might expect.

There was a group of us and we were all from New Brunswick, and our only option really was Rutgers. Either you got in, or that was it. Again, I'm really, really thankful to have had the luck of geography, because there weren't options in higher education. The county college system wasn't really up and running yet. Middlesex County College was about to open. There wasn't

this network. There was Rutgers and Douglass. There was a series of state teachers colleges. Certainly, there was Princeton, but that didn't even compute as a possibility. I came to Rutgers, and I'll sort of come back to that. Let me clean up the rest of the growing up stuff.

If I were to look at the three legs of growing up that created stability, it was really hanging out with people who were from New Brunswick but had pretty good aspirational stuff; being involved in a church and community that was pretty pure in terms of what they did, I mean, they did church-related activities; and then being involved in scouting. That kept a pretty good balance, because you could just see kids drifting away. Kids would drop out a lot. They'd hit sixteen, and they're gone. They would drop out of school.

It was a different time. You could get a job at sixteen. Here in New Brunswick, just [within] walking distance, you had lots of manufacturing. On Jersey Avenue, everything there was manufacturing, Delco-Remy, Cooper Tire, earlier on Mack Truck, Bond Clothing, several clothing kind of places, garment places, Squibb, Johnson & Johnson. I mean, all of that is [within] walking distance. It was a pretty vibrant place, and it was not unlike many cities all around New Jersey. You could drop out, and I have cousins who did and they did fine. [laughter] They did fine. I should've gone into their business. [laughter] One went into HVAC [heating, ventilation and air conditioning], and he retired at forty-five. [laughter] It was a different time.

Oh, I forgot, up on Jersey Avenue, I had two uncles who worked for Triangle Conduit and Cable, which was manufacturing wire. Then further out, on that same road, Jersey Avenue was Okonite, which was, again, a manufacturer of cable and wire. In retrospect, thinking about this, I realize that not only was this a pretty good place to work in the '50s and '60s, mid-'60s because of the job availability, there were people commuting in from as far as Pennsylvania that had already seen the rust belt developing and the downturn of traditional manufacturing, steel plants. They would come to New Brunswick and rent rooms and stay here.

They would come in a group. They'd live here Monday, Tuesday, Wednesday, Thursday, and then on Friday night, they'd drive back to Pennsylvania. Then, they would come back on Monday morning. At three in the morning, they'd get in the car, and they'd drive here because there were jobs. If it wasn't in New Brunswick, I mean Middlesex County had lots of jobs. There was a lot of manufacturing and industry, light steel manufacturing, small fabricators. There was a lot. The downtown was very vibrant. Can you imagine no malls, nothing around? The downtown on a Saturday was packed with people doing their shopping, college students. It was a pretty vibrant place.

My grandfather was the police sergeant for the downtown. He was the traffic sergeant. Now, a traffic sergeant today is a person who investigates accidents, handles traffic, like cars, but back then traffic meant that you wore white gloves and you moved traffic. Particularly in the summer when I was younger, my daily lunch routine was I would walk downtown by myself, and I'd hook up with my grandfather. We'd do lunch at one of the many, many, many, many little delis and so forth. Really the office buildings for the whole region were in downtown New

Brunswick. Of course, it was the county seat, so you had all the lawyers and you had all the doctors there actually in that downtown area and Livingston Avenue. To a lesser degree, some were over by Saint Peter's and Middlesex. You had huge numbers of people coming in and out of the town. Then, people would walk downtown for lunch and so forth, so it was a pretty vibrant place.

[There were] four movie theatres, and so just that alone should be some indication of the degree to which there was people. [There were] restaurants, real restaurants. [There was] a major hotel over there by George and Livingston Avenue, which there's a new high rise, high end, pretty expensive condo development, and that was the Roger Smith Hotel, which was pretty much the best hotel in the Central Jersey area, ballroom, restaurants, yeah, amazing. Of course, the fact that the train was here made a huge difference, and so the businessmen took the train every day to work. I didn't quite understand why you would go on a train to New York City every day, but there was a pretty large commuting class that came out of New Brunswick. The town was a great place to live.

WB: Well, let us go back a little bit.

EK: Sure.

WB: I would like to have you talk a little bit about some of the sights, sounds, smells around your home life.

EK: Home life, yes, okay. If I could, I'll combine it with living next to and in a church. The smell that is most distinctive to me growing up is any way, shape or form of pork frying. There's only part of the pig that Hungarians won't eat, and that's the oink. Snouts, brains, everything, there's going to be something made out of it. This is a good question. You'd have a feel of grease and a smell of grease, pork grease. You would have pork innards in buckets being washed and sitting in the backyard, intestines. The smell for me would be fried, fried pork of any way, shape or form [and] then the construction of some meals associated with that. Our house was sort of behind a church, so I had the opportunity to look down a block, the backyards of a block. I was at the top end on Somerset Street looking down to Hamilton Street, but my view out of the back of the house was down all the backyards.

The smokehouses, there were smokehouses as in smoking pork, chickens. [laughter] They picked up their lifestyle of a rural farming community in Hungary, and they said, "Wow, I'm going to buy a house. I'm going to put a chicken coop in the back forty." There really was this make-your-own [mentality]. People would think nothing of butchering. Down on French Street, there were butchers, and live chickens would come in in wooden crates. You could buy them live if you wanted to save a few dollars or a few cents and bring them home, or you could get them dressed for yourself.

There was a huge pork processing plant on French Street and Jersey Avenue. If you're going on French Street towards Somerset, and at the fork, there's a monument that says New Brunswick

on it. If you go right, it takes you up to Somerset, left down Jersey Avenue. On your left was a huge Swift Premium processing plant, pork processing plant. Then, the pigs would come in on rail cars, and they would do everything you'd want to do. The butchers would get most of their pork product from there, so they weren't bringing in live pigs. If I was to look at this visual imagery and smells, it would be picked-up farms and placed in a city view. People, in all neighborhoods, were very friendly. Particularly in the '50s, what people would do at night, particularly in the summers, they would go outside and sit outside. It doesn't matter who you were, what area of the town, that's what people did, and kids would play.

I'm going to stick with odor just for a moment. One of the odors was you knew when the tide went out on the [Raritan] River, because there was not a trunk sewer or waste water processing plant. On what was Burnet Street, then Route 18, there was a sewer pump plant, and it was the lowest point on the river, so all of the sewer lines drained down to the river. All they would do, at the high tide, is they would pump it out, and it would go down the river at high tide. Then, at low tide, I don't know if you've ever noticed the river, it can be very low. What you would get is this raw sewage smell until they put the trunk sewers in, which was not until either the late '50s or '60s.

WB: Okay.

EK: You knew when low tide was. In fact, they used to call it the "Rotten River." There's a little story about this. Way before my time, the parks up and down the river were central to Saturday-Sunday life, so you had Johnson Park right across the river. You had Buccleuch Park. You had Donaldson Park. These were places where people could get to, I'm told, by trolley, trolley lines. The tracks were still here when I was growing up. There weren't trolleys when I was a kid, but there were trolley lines here. It would get you to those parks. These things were booked by groups, whether it be the Knights of Columbus or the Saint Peter's Church or the Second Reformed Church picnic. Of course, they weren't exclusively for those organizations. It was always a fundraiser.

What you did on a Saturday or Sunday, you'd buy a ticket for God-only-knows how much, and you would just go hang out at these organized events. If you can imagine, on a Sunday, Johnson Park, it's filled with thousands and thousands of people. [laughter] That was true when I was growing up, with horse races on the track. There was a track there. There was horse racing on the track. The same thing with Donaldson Park. In Donaldson Park, they actually had a swim area into the river. A little further down in East Brunswick, there [was] another little swim area. I know, go swimming in the Raritan. [laughter] There's a story, which I've confirmed, a pretty famous woman, who had gone across the English Channel, came here to swim, and she refused to go into the water. [laughter] There's another smell. I'm going to stick with the smell theme here just for a moment.

Another smell was you knew when people were going to come home from work, particularly the people from Squibb, because Squibb would let the gases go. If you're playing, if it was around five o'clock, you'd say, "Oh, my gosh, Squibb." You'd smell it. All three of my aunts at one

time worked there. You could tell when Squibb would be letting out. Some sounds, at least for me growing up, right across the street, particularly in the summer on Division Street right behind what was Saint Peter's High School, which is now I guess Saint Peter's soon-to-be-defined, because I believe the school is closed, there was a truck spring repair facility. It's still there. My sound that I hear are anvils, you know, bing, bing. [Editor's Note: Dr. Kovacs makes a reverberating sound.] You could really hear them. If you walked by, it was free entertainment. You'd watch them with torches and sparks, and so you'd hear this.

Another sound, since we were near [Robert Wood Johnson] Hospital, was sirens. The hospital was relatively small when I was growing up. Oh, my gosh, it was a half [of] a block, and that was it. It was not really large, and half of that block was for the nursing school, a little nursing school attached. It was a relatively small hospital, as was Saint Peter's. You can see it more in Saint Peter's, an old building, and then they subsequently built around it. Some of the sounds, sirens.

Another sound was a coordinated chime of who's doing their church bells when. Yeah, this is one of the subcultures; you coordinated, so people weren't sitting on top of everybody else's bells. Those of us who were in the bell-ringing business, which I was, you knew you couldn't step on other people's [bells], and everybody talked to each other. My dad knew the custodian over here, that family pretty well here at the Second Reformed or the First Presbyterian or the Bayard Street Presbyterian or Saint Peter's or the A.M.E. Church or the Baptist Church. We wouldn't sit on top of each other's bells, and so you knew who had funerals. I don't know where this [came from]; it's not written. It's unwritten rules. [laughter] Everyone knew if you had a funeral, you preempted everybody, and so one of the ways that you announced to your congregation that someone had died is that there would be a single tolling of a bell, which announced to your congregation, because you knew it was your bell, that somebody had died. A day or two before a funeral, the day when the person died up to the funeral, that got coordinated, preemption, so there's another sound.

WB: You could distinguish the sound of your church's bell from all the other churches' bells.

EK: Of course, yeah, sure.

WB: You said this was unwritten. It was sort of word of mouth.

EK: Yeah, yeah, right. Just because they were Baptist doesn't mean you didn't talk to them or Greek Orthodox. On our street, there was the Magyar Reformed Church and there was the High Street Baptist Church and there was Saint Joseph Orthodox. I don't remember Russian or Greek, but they were all Hungarian. Then, right across the street and down two houses, next to my aunt's house was the Mount Zion A.M.E., which actually pre-dated all of us in terms of a church. It was the oldest of the congregations because all of these other ones were late. They were tied to the immigration waves. The A.M.E. Church was there forever, and that church was there through the '70s, the A.M.E. Church. They are now down off of George Street.

That's the other [thing]. Even parking was coordinated between the churches and start and finish of services, parking, [laughter] once Sunday school started. There was this unwritten agreement with the town, lots of double parking on Sunday mornings and start and finish of churches and preemption of parking for funerals. It made lots of little jobs for my life, one of which was I used to work for Gowan Funeral Home, which was on the corner of Harvey Street and is now the Hungarian American Athletic Club. That was the funeral home for the Hungarians. I worked initially just as a gopher, wash the cars for the funeral home guy. Then later, if there'd be a funeral, if there was one at our church, I would put up no parking signs because there's a funeral.

Then later, when I got my driver's license, I was an itinerant flower car driver, hearse driver, or whatever driver, and then even through college, I worked for the guy. He'd have my class schedule, and if there was a funeral with not enough hands, I'd work or be the greeter at the door. My wife can't believe how fast I can set up flowers, because I would run the flowers from the funeral home to the church and put them out. Then, I would run the flowers to the gravesite and put them out, and you can't spend a lot of time trying to make it look right because you've got people coming in.

Let me see, sounds, sights, smells. The last smell is the smell I got when I walked in this building. This is an old building. It was a residence at one time. That smell, I believe, comes from a combination of plaster, wood and old. [laughter] You go into an office building, you don't get that smell. With closed single-loop systems, you don't get that smell. My grammar school had that smell. This building had this smell. This was initially my adviser's office, and then he moved over there when I was a student. That smell was pervasive, that old building smell. Old Queen's had that smell before it was rehabbed. Winants Hall had that smell. I'm trying to think of the buildings that had that smell. Milledoler Hall had that smell. Buildings that had plaster and wood have that smell. Newer buildings like the Graduate School of Education didn't have that smell. Scott Hall didn't have that smell. All the churches had that smell. This church had that smell. I spent a lot of time over at this church growing up. That's another smell associated with growing up here.

WB: One question I was wondering, I forget if you mentioned it, did your parents speak Hungarian in the household? Did you grow up speaking Hungarian?

EK: That's a great question. The answer is sure, because my grandmother lived with us forever. She didn't speak any English, and particularly when I was young, I was around my grandmother a lot. She died in '57. Probably the first five or six years, she was sort of like the wooden spoon, knock you around, all the grandkids, and she didn't speak English. We lived in a duplex initially, so we had my grandmother and my aunt and a cousin living upstairs. We lived on the first floor. The answer is yeah. I was surrounded by the Hungarian language. My mother didn't, she could understand it, because she was not Hungarian. My father spoke it fluently. He could read it, write it. All the people around me could. I was immersed in the Hungarian language, like the services took place in Hungarian, the songs. Are you with me? All these little old ladies particularly didn't speak English. Ask me how much Hungarian I can speak.

WB: How much?

EK: None. Speaking of immersion, you would think. If I sit there and listen to somebody speak Hungarian, I sort of get the drift.

WB: Okay.

EK: I can get there. I can certainly cuss anybody out. [laughter] I can certainly do all body parts. I can do all that, but it's one of those conundrums. I think about it frequently. I'm an educator. We constantly are talking about ESL [English as a second language] and bridging, and there's the foundational stuff of being able to read and write English and not abandoning one's culture so being bilingual. I get the idea of why we would want to acknowledge our heritage and so forth, but for most of us who are my generation, none of it stuck. I don't know anybody who's my age who was born here and had similar experiences to me that can speak their language. By the way, that's also true for my dear friends on the other side of town who are Italian, whose parents and aunts and uncles didn't speak English. Okay, they're a little bit better ordering off the menu. The disappearing of the language was pretty rapid, I think. Frankly, I was already on Hungarian overload. I had no need to, gee, study more Hungarian.

WB: It was around you all the time.

EK: [What]?

WB: It was around you all the time.

EK: It's around me all the time. Why would I want to go visit the American Hungarian Heritage Museum with them? I don't know. I'm mentoring a young gentleman now from New Brunswick, and our hook to each other is New Brunswick. His parents are immigrants, Hispanic, and live on, I want to say, Codwise Avenue, but it's not. They live in New Brunswick, and he grew up here, went to New Brunswick High School. He went to the university that I teach at, and I met him through the Educational Opportunity Fund program. I'm mentoring him and working with him. We talk, and I'm astounded how similar his experience is as I listen to him. His parents were in the family business, which was being custodians. We talk quite a bit about the fact that he barely can speak Spanish when his parents speak no English.

SM: How do they communicate?

EK: Like I communicated with my grandmother, you know, through grunts and moans. To say he can barely speak Spanish, he certainly could speak Spanish. Is the language a first choice? Can you detect an accent? The answer is no, no, no, no, no. How well did he do in Spanish in college? Not very well. That's a different conversation, but I don't think it's dissimilar. When I wrote my senior thesis, I wrote about the Hungarian community, and I based it on [Milton M.] Gordon's *Assimilation in American Life*, which is still around as a theoretical model about what happens. The whole issue of language can be a lift if it's a second language. It's a barrier if it's

your first. Gordon wrote about this. I'm going to reinterpret what he said. You have to be able to do business. The realm of business is English. The reason my cousin had a great HVAC system [business] and built it was because he was not tied to only being able to do [business with] Hungarians.

My great uncle's business, Bessenyei Oil on Somerset Street in Franklin, was in a tailspin as a heating-plumbing oil-delivery enterprise, because he didn't speak English. He delivered to Hungarians. What do you do? When his son took over the business, it zoomed. Gordon talks about this difficulty of I would interpret it to be there's two souls burning within your breast. There's this, "Geez, I like this stuff, but on the other hand, I realize that I've got to move on," and I'm sure lots of people have that conversation. If you don't have that conversation, you've realized it too late, I think.

That's an opinion. That's a long answer to, "Gee, was it a Hungarian-speaking home?" and the answer is you bet. It was a Hungarian-speaking community. You could go from bar to what we would call a bodega, what is a corner store, the corner stores were butchers and little grocery stores and so forth, and you'd never have to be able to speak English. Buy a pair of shoes, absolutely, Hungarian. Hardware store, three of them, you didn't have to speak English. I teach classes in organizational change and management, and organizations that somehow want to stay in the past don't do very well. Churches are the best example of this. If you depend on what was, I'm not talking about the religion part of it, I'm talking about the organization and how it runs, you're doomed, because who you were is going to disappear on you. Of course, now with the Internet, that game has accelerated at hyper speed, changes on steroids. That's just sort of seeing how fast organizations come and go. The stability isn't there. So, that answers your question about that.

WB: I have two follow-up questions, and then we will move forward to your Rutgers years.

EK: Okay.

WB: Sam, do you have a question at this point that you want to ask?

SM: No, no, very interesting.

WB: What were your aspirations growing up?

EK: Like most kids, really young, I think my aspirations were have fun, enjoy life, get in trouble. Oh, my God, it was just being a kid, and I'm thankful that I had as much rope, freedom as I did because it allowed me to do some crazy, oh, my God, crazy-ass things. I think that the tipping point was later grammar school, where I realized that the people coming here and who they were were different than the people I knew.

WB: What do you mean?

EK: Well, the people going to college.

WB: Okay.

EK: The people going to Rutgers. Now, remember, my grammar school's right here. We're over here all the time, and I'm saying what they are doing is different than what the people I know are doing. That was fifth or sixth grade that you really saw that. I saw that. There's no such thing as an epiphany. You just saw it was different.

WB: Around what year is this approximately?

EK: That would be '59 or '60, yeah, '61 maybe.

WB: Okay.

EK: I'd ride my bike around here all the time, and I'd go visit my grandmother or just be around here. We'd play whiffle ball down here by Willie the Silent. We'd play tackle football on the grass over there by Fiji [Phi Gamma Delta], what was Fiji, the fraternity house at the intersection of Easton and Hamilton Street because that was the closest grass to where we were. There was no other grass. [laughter] There was no grass from Saint Peter's Hospital or anywhere until you hit Fiji. They never cared. We would go over there, kids playing, and then we'd come down here. We'd play tape ball, whiffle ball, whatever, down here [near] Willie the Silent. The maintenance guys would come say [makes a complaining noise]. I'd say, "Well, my grandmother's Helen Bahr." "Oh, okay. Just don't mess anything up." It was fifth or sixth grade, and I just knew it was different.

Again, this geography thing. It's very difficult I think for someone who doesn't know or doesn't have it as part of a family understanding about college particularly to understand the phenomenon and what that means. I do some work with at-risk students, and it's very difficult for them to understand and for the parents, who have no clue. My parents had no clue. My dad thought that going to college was going to football games and basketball games, because that's what he knew.

There was a really intimate relationship between the college and the townspeople back then, I mean, really intimate. Probably most of the people at football games [were townspeople], because the student body wasn't that big. I don't think my graduating class had a thousand in it. It was small. It was so small we didn't fill the spot in front of Willie the Silent with parents. [laughter] I can remember college professors, particularly in the summer, walking from here down to the faculty club, having long lunches and walking back. I said to myself, "Well, if I have the option of cleaning and buffing floors and cleaning bathrooms like my grandmother does or walking up and down College Avenue with a pipe in my mouth, I want that one," really. That would be the moment.

One last piece of this, I haven't been out of a college environment in my entire life. I don't know if you saw my bio, but I've been on a college campus since I could walk. I haven't left, because it was the gift of being here. Even in this town, if I walk from my parents' home to here, I know I can stop someone and I can tell the difference between a local, a college student, yeah, and I can [ask], "Who do you know that I know?" I just saw an electrician back here working on this Hillel building, and I knew his parents. He's an electrician. He owns a bait shop that he sells bait and tackle. [laughter] It's not that hard. The aspirational stuff clearly kicked in there.

I had [a] difficult time in middle school-junior high school. I'll attribute that to everything from puberty to being terrorized as a student. I had a huge number of sick days, because I just didn't want to go. I went from being a good student here to failing four out of five classes when I was in junior high school to graduating in the top ten out of my graduating class in high school. I'm bitter about that experience. [laughter] Frankly, the conversation about that, I would never say to my [son]. I'm a parent. That experience isn't going to ever happen. We can talk about why I should have a different view all we want. Of course, I have a son who's got a different view of it, but it's just not necessary. I would say that was the tipping point.

WB: Okay.

EK: Yeah, yeah.

WB: You mentioned a lot of trips into the city and around New Jersey with your school.

EK: Yeah, yeah.

WB: Were you conscious of whether those trips were free or whether your parents had to pay for that?

EK: I am conscious of it.

WB: Okay.

EK: Most everything was free or it was so little, and there was a fund that took care of anybody who couldn't pay.

WB: Oh, okay.

EK: Yeah, because it was a mixed bag of people. It was a mixed bag of people. I don't think I was atypical, a blue-collar family, so it was built-in. I think the cost of doing things was so much cheaper then. From the time I was about twelve years old, eleven or twelve years old, I hung with some really good people who are still my friends. We all grew up together here. They're still my friends. On Friday afternoons through college, we would go down to the train station on a Friday, less so in college because they changed the passes, we asked the businessmen for their rail passes. On Saturdays and Sundays, we'd go into the city. Imagine at eleven. Is anybody

here a parent? Can you imagine your eleven-year-old saying, "I'm going to the city"? [laughter] "Oh, yeah? Okay, okay." All the museums were free. My son and daughter-in-law are up in New York City, living a split relationship right now. We go up to the city pretty frequently. It's five hundred dollars to go to New York City. You see a show, go out to dinner, take your kids out. You either drive [and] park or take public transportation. It's five hundred dollars by the time you pay for the tickets. It's crazy. [laughter]

It's crazy. I remember going to see *Man of La Mancha*. It was fifty cents. That was a school-sponsored trip. It was fifty cents. We would get the rail passes to New York City. The subway was fifteen cents, and you could get to Yankee Stadium or Shea on the subway. If you had your student ID, you'd get a twenty-five-cent ticket. Here you are, you're in New York City, in the stadium for under fifty cents. Rutgers attendance at football games was so bad the athletic department would send the football players to my grammar school with free tickets. [laughter] [Editor's Note: The musical *Man of La Mancha* premiered in New York City in 1965. The original Yankee Stadium was located in the Bronx, adjacent to the new Yankee Stadium, which opened in 2009. The New York Mets played at Shea Stadium in Flushing, Queens from 1964 to 2008.]

WB: Oh, wow.

EK: I remember Billy Austin, who was an All-American at Rutgers, and he was one of the best football players. You can look him up. I remember he came over to the grammar school, because his roommate was a physical education teacher doing his student teaching. The whole football team showed up. I remember Billy Austin, because it was a big deal. He was an All-American, and I remember he handed out tickets, [laughter] signing them. You would sit in the old stadium in the end zone. It was not well attended. Most of the athletic events were not well attended, because first of all you didn't have [a huge student body]. Even if every student showed up, it wouldn't fill the stadium. I think the stadium held 24,000, so you'd still have twenty thousand people that you could fit in there.

I remember the undefeated season. I was there with a friend of mine from grammar school. We were right there when Rutgers had its first undefeated season in '61. I'm trying to get a hold of a piece of the goal post. The majority of the people there were townspeople. Local people would come to the pep rallies. They used to hold the pep rallies in front of Willie the Silent. That was back in the '50s, early '60s, and it was a pretty small place. I was trying to figure out how big my graduating class was. Did I answer your question? [Editor's Note: Bill Austin (1938-2015) played football and lacrosse at Rutgers from 1955 to 1958. In addition to being selected to the All-America Team in 1958, Austin finished sixth in voting for the Heisman Trophy. That year, the Scarlet Knights lost their second to last game against the Quantico Marines and finished with a record of 8-1. In 1961, under Coach John Bateman, Rutgers football achieved their first undefeated season, compiling a perfect 9-0 record.]

WB: Yes.

EK: Where I did I see it? I just said, "This is pretty cool." My freshman year of college, I met [a professor that I was] blessed to have, what little did I know was the best instructor that I ever had. I had a guy named Arnold Buss. He taught "Psych 101" in Scott Hall. I said, "Oh, my God, this guy's great," and he was. I never missed a lecture. Your sides were busting laughing. He taught me how to play squash over at the old gym, because he said, "If anybody beats me in squash, I'll give them an A." He says, "The only requirement is you can't have played squash." [laughter] I thought I'd give it a shot. Little did I know that he gave me the gift called a squash racket that got me into graduate school. [Editor's Note: From 1965 to 1969, Arnold H. Buss served as a psychology professor at Rutgers College.] We'll talk about Rutgers in a while.

This idea of being on a college campus, I'm not much of a student, I'm not bad, but I'm not much of a student, I realized that if you want the lifestyle, you've got to hang in and finish. That one I got; that one I figured out pretty early. I think a lot about this; I think about now higher education quite a bit. I teach a class on "Research Methods for Higher Education Administration." Of course, I ask people to write research questions, and so much of it is about the students who are in the program. It's about affordability, accessibility.

I don't know if higher education has ever been more accessible, not affordable, but accessible than it's been right now. There's 4,500 degree-granting institutions in the United States. There's a tendency to talk about the same three or four hundred. You pick up *The New York Times*, and they want to talk about the admissions policy changing at MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], Harvard, Yale. Stop it. [laughter] Stop it, please. That's interesting for the few thousand students who are going to be going there. Let's talk about the other million that will be going to college this year.

Affordability is a different issue, but certainly accessibility is the best it's ever been. There weren't that many people going to college when I went to college. I was the first in my family. It's pretty cool. For me, it was a blessing. I'm trying to think if there is anything else interesting about k through twelve. By the time I was in high school, Rutgers was still a backyard for me, but I was a little different. I wasn't just riding my bike around and doing stuff. I was more likely going to keg parties. [laughter] I'm a dean of students' worst nightmare, because I was invisible to them and a bunch of us were. We were insiders-outsiders. It was still our playground, even though I was fully involved in and engaged in my high school. I played football, ran track, did all kinds of volunteer-and-or-join-organizations kinds of things.

My family growing up friends, friends growing up family are still heavily involved in New Brunswick. The public information officer [assistant business administrator] for New Brunswick is a guy named Russ Marchetta. He's president of the New Brunswick Educational Foundation, which my wife and I support. It's a foundation to create everything from scholarships to financial resources for teachers to do the kinds of things that I described that happened to me, which I can't figure out why there's no money in the budget to do those things considering that New Brunswick has around 24,000 dollars per kid. That's private school money. That level of money, I don't want to beat up on this too much, but it's incredible. I'm willing to contribute to the foundation, because they're doing the things that I think should be going on. I think it's

incredibly important, for me, to continue to support this community, particularly my grammar school. One last piece. I graduated high school.

WB: What year was that?

EK: '68. In 1968, I graduated high school, and I walked away with enough money out of my high school to attend Rutgers for a year and a half, tuition money. I won the Lincoln School Scholarship. Now, that doesn't sound like a lot of money, but it was like three hundred bucks, something like that. I won the Robert Carlson Scholarship, which was like five hundred bucks. So, that was eight hundred dollars. Tuition at Rutgers, I'm looking at you, [laughter] for the first three years I was here was two hundred dollars per semester and sixty-four dollars for fees.

SM: Wow. [laughter]

EK: It was accessible. I had enough money to pay for the first year and a half. I'd work a summer job. I worked multiple summer jobs in New Brunswick, and I was living like a king. Are you kidding? [laughter] I made fifteen hundred bucks in a summer and, okay, five hundred bucks for tuition. I had a car. I lived on campus for a while. I had a meal plan. I paid for it. [laughter] It was like you could do it. You could do it, come out with no debt and work and pull it off. I think that's the accessibility issue. That's a different conversation; let's stick with mine. [laughter]

Here you go. I knew the only option was Rutgers, and I knew it wouldn't be a stretch. By that point, I knew. I was hanging out with the counseling staff at the high school, and Vince Kramer was the director of admissions, who played cards with my grandfather down at the Elks. [Editor's Note: Vincent Kramer graduated from Rutgers College in 1941 and served as a Marine Corps officer during World War II and the Korean War. George S. Kramer served as the director of admissions and vice provost at Rutgers.] I had good grades. I was not a risk, but they weren't going to take all of New Brunswick High School to go to Rutgers. There were a number of us that were pretty high caliber. The people I came out of New Brunswick High School with that went to Rutgers, I'm the low achiever.

There are a couple of doctors. There's a guy who is sort of well-known in the San Francisco area as an attorney who is a defender of people who are indefensible for murder trials and he's a winner. He wins them all the time. [laughter] He's really well known out there. There is a physician and a pretty large developer. These were not risky people, you know, you're going to get to Rutgers, you're not going to graduate. The chances of us graduating were like a hundred percent. I only applied to one school, to Rutgers, and came here. I'll tell my dean of students story.

The dean of students back then was Howard Crosby, and the dean of students' office was the Mine Street into Union Street parking lot, there's a building that's no longer there, so that was the dean of students' office. Like a good city kid, I knew who was in charge when I was in high school or even before that. The dean of students was Howard Crosby. I met Howard Crosby at a

keg party when they were trying to kick out all the townies over in Tinsley Hall. I walked right up to him, and I said, "Dean Crosby, this is awful. When are we going to get these city kids out of here?" "Absolutely right. We're working on it right now." [laughter] I walked away. [laughter] For the next few years, I waved at him. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Howard J. Crosby, Jr., who graduated from Rutgers in 1941, served in the administration at Rutgers for nineteen years as the dean of men and dean of students.]

WB: Wow.

EK: My freshman year, there was a freshman orientation in the old gym, "The Barn." I'm walking out. He waves to me, he says, "You had an orientation today? Haven't you graduated?" I walked up to him, I said, "Dean Crosby, look, I'm a freshman. You probably know my grandmother Helen Bahr." "Yeah, I know her." I said, "Yeah, well, that's my grandmother." The dean laughed, he says, "You come see me." That little story is how I then on and off spent the next four to five years because I either got hired part time or I worked out or I was the go-to boy for every student committee out of the dean of students' office. I was on the college student financial aid committee for awarding scholarships and so forth. It was right at the transition of when the Bahr family had donated a lot of money for college football. It was the first of, "Let's go big." I was on the financial aid committee for the University awarding scholarships and so forth and setting policy. I did that for three years. It was fun.

I was involved in a ton of student organizations and worked there. I was on the student disciplinary board. I was doing all kinds of things like that. I was really ingrained in [student life]. By the way, I went to class every once in a while. I wasn't a great student. I was an okay student, but I liked being on a college campus. I'll go forward and then go backwards.

I was working at the dean of students' office, and at the time, all three assistant deans, one for residence life, fraternity affairs and multicultural affairs, the three assistant deans had gotten their master's degrees and worked out of Penn State. [laughter] I got my master's at Penn State and worked in student services out there for a number of years. There was this nice little bridge. I understood how college campuses worked. I know how they're administered. I understood the student life side of things, but I also understood the academic side of how colleges worked.

In my time here, there were several major upheavals. [During] the '60s upheavals, the transition from what was to what is and what would be, there was serious student demonstrations around three areas. The first one was the lack of people of color at the institution. The second was the whole Kent State, are we teaching today's students for yesterday? It was the whole shutdown of the university for a month into no exams. In 1970, that ties back to the protests on the Vietnam War, but it fundamentally changed Rutgers and its agenda. [Editor's Note: On May 4, 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard fired upon demonstrators at Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine. For days, students at Kent State had been protesting the expansion of the Vietnam War to include operations in Cambodia. The shootings at Kent State fueled the anti-war movement, and massive protests and strikes took place on college campuses across the nation.] Everything from the core curriculum, what dictates what is a liberal arts

education, the *trivium* and *quadrivium*, which are the three arts and the four sciences, which was the foundation for most colleges up through that point, public or private, [changed] to much more applied learning, studies that were seen as being on the fringe, being more integral. That was the second major upheaval that took place. The first one was '69, and the next one was '70.

Then, in '71, there was a knock-down drag-out [fight] about Rutgers going coed. Up to that point, mine was the last all-male graduating class. [Editor's Note: The first coeducational class in Rutgers College history, which included 475 women, began classes in the fall of 1972 and graduated in 1976.] I love to say this in class. I don't love to say it because I'm proud of it. I say I love to say it, if you were a woman and you wanted to go to the state university and study agriculture, engineering, or pre-med, you couldn't. I think that's a pretty amazing statement. Not any other reason than you couldn't. You'd go to Douglass, but there was no cross-registration. Not until my senior year could you take classes at Douglass or Livingston [College]. You couldn't do it.

The Engineering School was part of Rutgers College, the Ag [Agriculture] School, and most of my friends in college had the legacy of this land grant place, which was they were engineering majors, they were ag majors, or they were bio-sci [biology-science] majors. They used to disdain those of us who were liberal arts majors. The business school was just starting. Departments like sociology or history or the language departments weren't for majors per se, but they were just part of this you'd select a social science, a history, a language as part of what you're really here to do. It was this shift, not just here. This was a shift that was going on across the country.

WB: Well, let me ask you, one, what did you major in?

EK: Sociology.

WB: Two, can you talk to me a little bit about how you felt at the time about each of these three upheavals, as you called them?

EK: Yeah. I would love to say I was a participant-observer, but I'm not that sophisticated at the time. [Editor's Note: Dr. Kovacs is referring to *Street Corner Society*, in which the author William Foote Whyte is a participant-observer in an Italian-American neighborhood in Boston.]

WB: Okay.

EK: I'm not sure anybody's ever really a participant-observer. You guys study this more than I do. I had read *Street Corner Society*, which is a foundational book about gangs in Boston, and of course the writer essentially became part of the gang. By the way, if you listen to NPR, Columbia, *The Season*, you'll see this guy who hated football who was the narrator is so consumed by this Columbia football thing [that] he suits up and goes to a practice at the end of the season he has been so enculturated and grabbed. [laughter] He was supposed to be an observer. [laughter] What the hell kind of a researcher is he? The disconnect between high

school and college was profound in terms of who was sitting in the classroom. [Editor's Note: *The Season* is a weekly podcast that aired on the National Public Radio affiliate WNYC in 2015 about the Columbia University football team.]

WB: Okay.

EK: For the first and the third one, which are coed, I'm creating a multi-racial campus community, because it wasn't. It was really a different place. Rutgers today is probably more first gen now than it was then. There were lots of second and third legacy generation people. It was a small place. It was small. When I came in, there was already two hundred years of history, 190 of it as a private liberal arts college. Rutgers wasn't fully the state university until the mid-'50s. It wasn't until the Constitution of 1940, the state constitution, that it signed letters of intent.

It was a private school, and they acted like a private school. They still act like a private school sometimes. I mean, there's still the question about the Board of Trustees and the Board of Governors here, which is a 250-year-old legacy. [Editor's Note: Founded as Queen's College in 1766, Rutgers College existed as a private college for men for much of its history. The Board of Trustees served as the governing body of the college. In 1864, owing to George Cook, Rutgers won the state's selection for the land grant college, called the Rutgers Scientific School, which established ties to the state. In 1917, the state designated the Rutgers Scientific School as the State College of Agriculture, giving the school state university status. In 1918, Douglass College was founded as the New Jersey College for Women, the coordinate women's college to Rutgers College. Two state laws passed in 1945 and 1956 completed the process of Rutgers becoming the state university. In 1956, the Board of Governors became the governing body of the University, with the Board of Trustees functioning in an advisory role. In recent years, the Board of Governors expanded to fifteen members, of which eight are chosen by the governor and seven are selected by and from the Board of Trustees.]

I got why this place had to change. How do I feel? I said, "It's about time." I remember sitting having a conversation with one of the assistant deans and one of the faculty members, who I think is still here, (Showalter?), talking about coeding at Tumulty's Pub over too many beers and then over at Old Queen's about this whole issue of coed particularly. Most of us are like, "Come on." I think it [came] too late; it was late. I have to be very careful. I'm trying to remember how I felt at the time versus reflecting back. I don't want to beat up on Rutgers, but I will. It's easy to do. I went to Penn State, and I said, "Oh, my God, this is a state university." Just, "Oh, my God."

It was organized. It was a greased machine. I was on the facility side, the family business. Guess what I was in charge of when I went out to Penn State. [laughter] Buildings, bathrooms, plumbing, cleaning and waxing floors. I remember on move-in day out there at Penn State, a lock didn't work, and not only within minutes did a locksmith show up but a carpenter to shave down the door. There was tunnels that connected all the residence halls, and so they moved all [the supplies that way]. There were no trucks moving beds or toilet paper. It was all done

underneath with golf carts, and of course this was a long time ago. Registration took minutes. I said, "Oh, my gosh, it's a university." I didn't know. That was the epiphany for me. I just assumed every place was like Rutgers. What do you know? I learned quite a bit.

For me, I knew it wasn't right. I knew the restriction on entry wasn't right, that few people could attend wasn't right, or relatively few. For me, that was okay. That was more than okay. I thought it was a pretty warped environment being in an all-male school. I think it's awful. I thought it was awful then. I don't get this. [laughter] You come from a k-through-twelve education where you've got lots of tall people, short people, black people, white people, males, females, whatever. Then, you get to college, it was like, "What?" [laughter] I think it was long overdue, long, long overdue. This is not me speaking then. This is me speaking now.

[There was] profound institutional sexism and racism inbred into how the University was organized. [There was] a women's school [and] Livingston College, because we don't Rutgers College tainted. How institutionalized can you get? [Editor's Note: In 1964, Rutgers acquired 540 acres of Camp Kilmer in Piscataway. The next year, Ernest A. Lynton led a group of planners in designing an innovative, experimental institution dedicated to teaching social sciences. By 1969, after race riots across the nation and demonstrations at Rutgers protesting racial inequalities, planners expanded the new college's mission to emphasize diversity and began to recruit and enroll minority students and faculty members. Under the leadership of Dean Lynton, Livingston College opened in 1969 as Rutgers-New Brunswick's first coeducational residential college.] We saw that. There wasn't anybody in the student body saying, "Don't make it coed." Douglass was a different story. It's still a different story. There's still that conversation that's going on about should it be its own place and is there something distinctive going on and there is. I think those two are clear.

I think the anti-war movement, that went like lightening around the country every place and [was] affiliated with, I think, societal change. It wasn't just the war but fundamental changes about society. [It is] not that I'm ambivalent about it. I see the changes that needed to take place in the curriculum that came immediately. It was concurrent. There was several weeks in the gym with an open faculty meeting, and the students came and watched the faculty interact about curriculum. There were faculty [that] said, "This is an opportunity." Faculty are strange birds. Their definition of change is going from percolated to drip coffee. I mean, there's profound incrementalism in higher education, and the longer people are around as tenured professors the less likely they are to want to change. Truthfully, this was an opportunity by some of the more progressive faculty to consider fundamental changes to the University, which then led to a conversation about being coed and moving everything forward, so I think it all happened pretty rapidly.

It didn't change Rutgers on the dime. There's still the legacy issues associated as an outsider. Those are three pretty interesting events, at least in my mind. The last one was not as much of a fight. I think there was consensus to go coed, but think about this. It took another, I don't know, thirty years to go to where you had not three departments of English. Change is not quick at this place. [Editor's Note: In 1981, Rutgers-New Brunswick consolidated the different faculties of

the undergraduate colleges, Rutgers College, Livingston College, Douglass College, University College and Cook College, into a single entity, the Faculty of Arts and Sciences (FAS). In 2006, the University undertook the consolidation of the undergraduate colleges with the creation of the School of Arts and Sciences (SAS). Douglass College became a residential college, and Cook became the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences (SEBS).]

Let's see, my undergraduate experience here, let me see if I can characterize it by going to class, doing papers, studying for exams, drinking a lot of beer. I'll say this nicely. I'm a better student today than I was [or] have ever been. It's unfortunate college was wasted on me. I mean, I was not a bad student and I was fully engaged in student life, so you're likely to see me at lectures and art openings. I was a good student, but I'm not sure most eighteen-year-olds are ready for the serious conversation and have enough context to engage in that conversation. I think people are sort of grunting it out, thinking about what they're going to do tonight or this weekend other than study and go to class. Maybe you're different. [This is] not to say that people partied every night.

I will honestly say that people, maybe except for their senior year, nobody partied during the week here. You partied on weekends. You studied every night. Most everybody studied every night. You'd go any place on campus, you would never find a party or people hanging out or drinking beer. You wouldn't, during the week. You would find people in the library. You would find them at something called "The Tombs." "The Tombs" were the basement rooms of the River Dorms, the classrooms down there, which are remarkably quiet at night. They were packed with people studying. [Editor's Note: The River Dorms are Campbell, Frelinghuysen and Hardenbergh Halls, which are located on George Street overlooking the Raritan River.] Places like Scott Hall, and Scott particularly, were left open at night where students would just go in and study. I know it's hard to believe, but it's true. [laughter] Remember, there was a disproportionate number of science and engineering majors, science, engineering, and ag.

Anybody can be a sociology major. I'm not trying to denigrate [it], it's the discipline, but it's not four semesters of calculus. It's not organic chemistry. It really isn't. That's a different level of learning. Those people, my friends who were chemical engineering majors, they studied all the time. Pre-med, they studied all the time. The ag people were constantly in the lab and doing experiments and stuff. I mean, it was serious stuff. I think in that way it was probably a little bit different than it is now. In that way, Rutgers is probably much more like Penn State.

When I got out to Penn State, yeah, this runs like a university, but out there, people would start drinking beer on Sunday nights and they wouldn't stop until Sunday morning. [laughter] It was a different place, which I came to find out, that is, having spent some time, some internships at Purdue and at the University of Michigan, is more similar. Those were all the same. That's exactly what they're like. There were lots of people, forty to fifty thousand people, 250 to three hundred people in a lecture hall, and graduate assistants for recitation sections, and maybe around your junior or senior year, you'd begin to see real professors.

Here, I had them from the get-go; I had real professors. I had relatively small classes. I remember taking "Western Civ[ilizations]," which was required of the entire first-year class, and we were in Records Hall. They divided it in half, so half the class would take it at one time and then the other half of the entire freshman class would take it later in the day. There were a series of talking heads, who were experts, up on the stage in Records Hall. Records Hall was just a big open building. At one point, it served as the cafeteria before the Commons for the college. There was a stage, and you'd have people from the history department who, you came to find out, [were] real-deal scholars in their field doing their expertise about western civilization. I think there were ten lectures by ten different [professors], one each week of ten weeks. You had one of those ten guys for the recitation section all semester. I had McCormick. I had Dick McCormick, not the former president, [but] the former president's father, for the recitation section. It was in the Education building, second floor, during the day. [Editor's Note: Dr. Kovacs is referring to the Graduate School of Education building, located on Voorhees Mall. Richard P. McCormick, RC '38, GSNB '40, spent his career at Rutgers as a history professor, administrator and university historian. His son, Richard L. McCormick, taught history at Rutgers early in his career and then later served as the president of Rutgers University from 2002 to 2012.]

WB: Do you want to take a break?

EK: That'd be great.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

WB: We will start up again. I wanted to go back and talk about the extent that you were politically aware growing up all the way up through your undergraduate years, where we left off. I want to start off with your parents, particularly on your father's side and your grandparents being of Hungarian ethnicity. Were you aware of any anti-Russian, anti-Communist belief growing up?

EK: Oh, interesting. I didn't think that second part of the question would be the question, but okay. The answer is yeah, particularly anti-Communist for at least my family because our family property, that I talked about in the beginning and the family farm, there's always this hope that you're going to go back. [laughter] I don't care if it's now or a hundred years ago, but somehow you're going to make your millions and go back. Prior to World War II and immediately after World War II, for a period of time, my family were still paying taxes in Hungary, and the lands were confiscated by the Hungarian regime, which was Communist-backed. Yeah, there was no question in my mind; these are people who just take private property, so it was not a little bit. Recognize also that in fairness all of my working family were in unions of one shape, way or form.

WB: Okay.

EK: All of them. My dad was a garment worker, union, for thirty-some years. My uncle was a sheet metal worker, so it was an International Brotherhood of, whatever, Sheet Metal Workers. My aunts were a member of a union at Squibb. Let me make sure I work my way around. They all were. There were strikes all the time. There was always one of my family members on strike when I was growing up. I don't want to romanticize this, but it was I think one-third of the American population through the '60s who worked were in unions, and I would guess that it was higher here.

WB: Okay.

EK: Much higher. Yeah, Delco, which was GM [General Motors], on Jersey Avenue, you had Mack Truck, which was UAW [United Auto Workers], so I think there were unions all over the place. On top of that, most everybody who was in the trades were even members of unions, so you had plumbers and electricians and so forth. The guy I just talked with, he's a union electrician working on this job. He's probably a second, third, fourth generation union electrician. I think the idea of unions and what they are and who they are, you can't put that under the lens of today, but was there conversations about unions? You bet, all the time. Anti-Communism, I would suspect yeah. There was nothing naïve about [it], at least in my family.

There was at one time a pretty sizeable Hungarian Jewish community here in New Brunswick who lost all of their family during World War II. These were children of grandparents who might have immigrated here. Of course, there's not a lot of difference between the Russians and Germans in terms of getting rid of Jews. That's what I understood growing up. There was a pretty strong anti-Communist sentiment. There wasn't a lot of support in the '60s when the Rutgers professor declared himself a Communist, Genovese. [Editor's Note: In 1941, Hungary's Jewish population totaled approximately 825,000 people. In the time period between the German invasion of Hungary on March 19, 1944 and Soviet liberation in early 1945, about 620,000 Jews were killed, including more than 437,000 Jews who were taken from their homes, stripped of valuables, confined in ghettos, deported to Auschwitz, and then killed in a seven-week period in the late spring and early summer of 1944. During the postwar period of Soviet occupation, the secret police, NKVD, arrested thousands of Hungarians, including hundreds of Jews who had managed to survive in Budapest, and imprisoned them in the gulag. (United States Holocaust Memorial Museum, *Historical Atlas of the Holocaust*, pgs. 185, 187, 188; Alex Kershaw, *The Envoy: The Epic Rescue of the Last Remaining Jews of Europe*, pgs. 60, 167)]

WB: Eugene Genovese.

EK: Eugene Genovese. There was a serious controversy about that at that time in that discourse. I don't think you would have found the Ruck, Collate, and *hoi polloi* who were members of unions somehow standing up and saying, "Yeah." [Editor's Note: On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Scott Hall discussing the war in Vietnam, history professor Eugene D. Genovese declared, "I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Amidst the firestorm of controversy that ensued, Rutgers University President Mason W. Gross resisted

public pressure to dismiss Genovese and defended the principle of academic freedom. Genovese left Rutgers in 1967 to teach at Sir George Williams University in Montreal.]

WB: Okay. There is a distinction.

EK: Yeah.

WB: Between Soviet Communism and unionizing here in the United States.

EK: Yes, in my opinion. Recognize that all of these guys, I apologize if I'm focusing on the males who were working, my aunts were working too, they were all [veterans], a hundred percent. All of them had done their time. My dad was drafted at thirty-five. He was supporting his mother and two younger sisters, and he got drafted. He did D-Day plus two as a heavy equipment operator, and then after D-Day he got shipped to the Pacific to do more of the same. These people were no nonsense. They saw less gray. There was less nuance in their perspective of stuff. [laughter] [Editor's Note: During World War II, the Allies invaded the Normandy region of German-occupied France on June 6, 1944, known as D-Day.]

WB: What about yourself, as you are getting older, as you are graduating high school, and entering Russia, Rutgers? [laughter]

EK: Yeah, that too.

WB: [laughter] Entering Rutgers. Are you aware of what we now refer to as the Cold War?

EK: Sure, sure. One more Lincoln School story. We practiced duck and cover. One of our trips every year was over to Camp Kilmer, and we went to the Nike missile bases. These are the missiles that will shoot down the Russian bombers. Was I aware of the risk? Yeah. In fact, some of the kids who were in my class, [their] fathers were staffing the missiles, the missile defense system, which was right over there in Piscataway. It was headed towards New York City. They were interceptor missiles. [I was] profoundly aware of the Cold War, as characterized by the Boy Scout troop over here saying, "In a nuclear attack, you're going to be the first line of defense," which is just incredible to think about. [laughter] Atom bombs coming into New York City, or hydrogen bombs, better make a martini. [laughter] We were all trained in this response and what to do in a nuclear attack. [laughter] We [would] go out into the hallway, because there were concrete walls and so there was no windows. We would put our heads over here, one arm on our forehead, and we'd cover the back with our hand, so that would handle the concussion from the blast. I still practice it daily just in case. [laughter] I was aware.

Of course, there are a little bit of gradations, but I don't think that there was this, "Jeez, you're in a union, you're a Communist," or, "You're a socialist." Those are people who are using the lens of the movie *Reds* to look at people who belonged to a church, went bowling, went to work, drank Pils beer out of quart bottles because that's the cheapest way you could do it. I don't think the national conversation about Communism, McCarthyism, the one example that I gave you

was really an exception to that, but really not part of the regular conversation. I will talk about local politics.

This is a political town. You know that, right? I'm sorry. You're not supposed to answer back, but it is. There hasn't really been an election here in years, ever. My dad was the elected committeeman for the Democratic Party here in New Brunswick for the Hungarians. [It was an] unpaid volunteer position, and of course there could've been a Republican counterpart, [laughter] but there wasn't. My dad had his lists of every person in every home on every election day [and] got every person out to vote, so it was a pretty well-greased Democratic machine. [Editor's Note: *Reds* is a 1981 Warren Beatty movie about the life of journalist John Reed. McCarthyism refers to the Red Scare of the 1950s, which began after Senator Joseph McCarthy alleged Communist infiltration in the State Department.]

WB: For how long did he serve in that capacity?

EK: From the '50s through probably 1972.

WB: Okay.

EK: He did it a long, long time. He was a very staunch supporter of the Democrats. Every Sunday before the election, the Hungarians in New Brunswick would put on a big banquet for all of the people running for election, and they'd put on this Hungarian meal, stuffed cabbage, chicken paprikash, which is chicken and paprika. It would be over at the HAAC, the Hungarian American Athletic Club, which is now on Harvey Street but then was right next to the hospital. You'd have the governor show up and you'd have the senator show up and the congressman show up. In New Brunswick, the Democratic Party was organized around ethnicity and race. It was well organized, and the larger New Brunswick Democratic organization was smart enough to make sure that there was a person of color, [laughter] a Hungarian, an Irishman who was there.

If you look at the town council today, it looks pretty much the same. It was predetermined. The Hungarian guy was not my father. He was the local committeeman, but it was a guy named Luke Horvath, who had a clothing store. He was a male haberdasher, right next to Stuff Yer Face. It was Luke's University Shop. He sold preppy stuff, too. It was the closest to the campus. He was a tailor. He would fit the faculty. He would fit the students. They'd go over there and get their bow ties. He was the commissioner, the town commissioner. The guy who was mayor for most of the time growing up for me was a guy named Chester Paulus. He owned a dairy in town. There were five dairies in New Brunswick where they processed milk, so one was Paulus Dairies. Krauszer's was another one; you may seem the name every once in a while. They were right by the grammar school over here near where you live. They were all over town. Milk would come in, and they would process it and deliver it.

The Democratic Party, there was only one way to vote here. It's how people voted. It was pretty organized. It was really old city stuff. I won't say, "Vote early, vote often" and people coming out of the graves to vote, but it wasn't far removed from that. My dad would look at the end of

the day, and he knew what time every person would show up to vote. If they weren't there, he'd send a car out, get them to come running, and make sure that they would come out and vote. It was Democratic, solid, lots of union, lots of blue-collar factory jobs, industrial jobs.

WB: What was your opinion at the time of Vietnam? When did you become first aware of it, and then how did you feel about it as it played out?

EK: I'm going to answer this very delicately. [In the] spring of 1965, probably April, I was a member of this Boy Scout troop over here, and some of us went off to high school and Skip Baumann went to Vietnam. He was a dropout. He didn't go to college, didn't go to high school, but he joined the service in '65. In 1967 [1966], he was killed in Vietnam. He's a very close friend. I think about him often. There's a memorial. He was a Boy Scout. There's a camp up in North Jersey that some of us have contributed money to a lodge that was built in his memory.

I would say my opinion about that war developed at that point, because you're young, you lose a friend, and you're trying to figure out why you're there. Frankly, I don't think it's too dissimilar to what's going on right now. You wonder how much time we spend as a country overseas, and I think that's a thought about it back then. Was I against the war? I'm not sure if I was sophisticated [enough to] understand earlier on, in the mid-'60s, before I got to college, whether I really had a clear understanding of why we're there or the effectiveness of it or who the players were and what they wanted.

I got a better understanding of that certainly while I was in college and certainly was much more focused by '69 or '70. Clearly, most of us thought, "What the heck are we doing here?" I had a lot of friends who were in ROTC, and before you think they were all gung ho, they weren't. They [thought], "What are we doing here? What's the plan?" I have a lot of vets [veterans] in class right now. The class I had last night, about a third are vets who've done more tours than you want to shake a stick at and who are on the Yellow Ribbon Program or veterans benefits, not unlike the GI [Bill] benefit. For people who have served, I think they have the same questioning that I heard during Vietnam about what the hell are we doing, sort of a convoluted mess, if you'd listen to them.

It was the same kind of thing you would hear from students who had flunked out of Rutgers and then were coming back after a tour as vets in '68, '69, '70. People were a little bit older. They were just saying, "What are we doing? What's the plan?" I think that certainly shaped my impression. I had several friends from college who were older than me who were vets who had gone to Vietnam. All of those things influenced [me], but I'm not a person to throw everybody out because that somehow will fix things. I'm not a person who perceives change in a revolutionary way. I see it as an evolutionary way. In revolution, I think too many people die. [Editor's Note: The Reserve Officer Training Corps (ROTC) is a college-based officer training program, in which students get tuition assistance from the military and are commissioned as second lieutenants into one of the military branches upon graduation.]

WB: You said that you had friends who were a little bit older than you who were returning from Vietnam and then were enrolled at Rutgers.

EK: [Yes].

WB: Oftentimes, we hear that those men were treated harshly returning to the United States. Was that the case for any of your friends?

EK: I would agree that, yeah, I think a lot of vets were treated harshly. That was not in my experience.

WB: Okay.

EK: These guys were welcomed.

WB: Okay.

EK: Not even a little bit [were they treated harshly]. I don't think the faculty looked at them in disdain. I think that it's naïve to think that you could throw a twenty-four-year-old veteran in with an eighteen-year-old taking the same class and teach the eighteen-year-old and not have the twenty-four-year-old say, "What? Are you kidding?" I don't think they were treated harshly, but I don't think faculty members could get away with what they could get away with an eighteen or nineteen-year-old. I know that for a fact. I just know that.

I think there's a huge difference between an impressionable person going through their own developmental processes as a college student eighteen to twenty-one versus a person who's had a global experience and has gone through a good number of those in a different way and now is returning to get an education. I think those conversations were interesting to watch, and I loved watching some of the vets just push back on faculty, not in a disrespectful way. Yes, I get the, gee, lots of vets were not treated well, but I don't think they were mistreated, from the people I knew.

WB: Okay.

EK: It's not that big of a place. I didn't see the ROTC marching up and down College Avenue taking on the long-haired [insert]. I didn't see that, and if it happened, it happens in someone's memory. [laughter]

WB: Okay.

EK: I would say there was more discord between those guys who are out there right now building the building right here and college students.

WB: Explain that.

EK: I think that if there was a feeling that college students were anti-American or pro-Communist and so forth, that played out more in the way that some of the steelworkers fabricating the buildings around here or bricklayers or electricians interacted with the college students.

WB: Oh, okay.

EK: I'm just saying that there was a more of a disconnect there. I'll describe one incident. It's sort of sad but humorous. There must have been ten or twelve guys with a metal barrel that you ice down beer in. They were walking down Hamilton Street, and they were carrying their fraternity flag. A piece of steel was being delivered. It was coming off of Somerset Street and coming down College Avenue. The steelworkers had these metal hardhats on, and they stopped the truck. They thought it was a Communist flag, because it was red. They beat the shit out of them. [laughter]

WB: Wow.

EK: I forgot about that. [laughter] That was a spring day. Let me tell you what those guys were doing. I think there was a little tension. There's no question there was tension. That's sort of the way I perceived it anyway.

WB: Okay.

EK: I forgot about that. That's interesting, yeah.

WB: How aware were you of the civil rights movement either during your later high school years or your years at Rutgers?

EK: Let me go with the civil rights in the '60s. I think it was a pretty good time to be alive, not because it was good times. In '67, there were riots in New Brunswick, not to the extent that you might have seen in Detroit or Newark, but they were riots nonetheless. It was a de facto segregated community, not the schools but the communities where people lived. There's no question that there was discrimination in everything, [including] hiring, here in an industrial town.

WB: You were aware of that at the time.

EK: Absolutely, of course. I'm going to school and I'm playing on a football team with people of color and their experience and my experience are completely different experiences in the same town. Of course, [I was aware]. Who got into college prep and who didn't? Now, does that mean there were no students of color in college prep? No, not at all but not proportional to the number of students of color in the class. I can say the same thing about women, not proportional. It was sexism and racism mired and marbled through the system, which is still

true. The most segregated hour in the United States is church hour. It was then, too. It doesn't mean the churches weren't cooperative with each other. It was based on race, ethnicity. Certainly, I was aware, and everyone was aware. Particularly at the high school level, there was serious conversations about issues surrounding both race relations but racial discrimination. It percolated two years after I graduated.

There was a knock-down drag-out [fight] at the high school, which, in my opinion, ruined the school system because it was a regional school system, so it just accelerated white flight and so North Brunswick built its own high school, done, done. I was part of a group back then, a student dialogue in the '70s regarding keeping the school and expanding it to a regional school, but that wasn't happening. That was not happening. I'll just go back. I think the town fathers and mothers, at the time, were smart enough to at least keep representation of everybody who lived in town in the governance of it, including the school board. The Democratic organization had people of color. I'm not saying it was good. I'm just saying you didn't have the destructive riots. There were more protests than riots. There was not burning of buildings that took place in New Brunswick.

WB: What was your opinion of the protests as they were happening?

EK: My opinion was I was sympathetic, that this stuff's not right. I think if you're sixteen, seventeen, eighteen, and you are in the community, you've grown up in the community, I think you'd say, "Hey, this isn't right. This isn't right." Particularly you saw the placement of students in the school system and how they were tracked. I think that schools were not segregated at the grammar school level. I was thinking about this. I was thinking, "Gee, I wonder if some of the schools had higher proportions of African American students or not." I don't know. I think not. I think not, but I don't know.

WB: You are talking about now versus then.

EK: I'm talking about then.

WB: Okay.

EK: I'm talking about then.

WB: Okay.

EK: I'm talking about then. There was some public housing that was, in fact, I had an uncle that lived there, down on Memorial Parkway or Route 18. The neighborhoods were not as segregated [then]; they're probably more segregated now. I grew up right here on Division Street, and there were a large number of black families. Maybe there's forty houses, and six or eight black families there had been there forever, Cuban families and the rest Hungarian. I think the neighborhoods were less segregated than subsequently happened, at least when I was growing up in the '50s.

WB: Okay.

EK: There was black police officers. I played sports with some of the athletes whose fathers were police officers. A huge number? No. I must tell you, I saw a swearing-in in the *Home News Tribune* of new police officers and I was just wondering what town they're supposed to be representing because they're all white guys. I was thinking, "My God, what are they doing?" [laughter] I hope somebody speaks Spanish.

WB: This reminds me of something I wanted to ask. You recognized black police officers, not many, but you said there were some. Do you remember the ethnic makeup of your teachers in grammar, junior high or high school?

EK: All women in grammar school.

WB: Okay.

EK: All white. [There were] two black [teachers]. I never had a black teacher. In other words, back then, you got assigned. Your second grade [teacher], she taught you everything. There were two. I'm trying to see if there were any other ethnicity. There were certainly Hungarians. There were certainly Germans. There was a mess of stuff. Junior high school, it was a mix of faculty. Then, we get to high school, there were certainly black faculty and Hispanic.

WB: Were there Hungarian faculty?

EK: A few, not many, not many. Two, an English teacher and a science teacher. Jolan Varga was chair of the English department, and Bertalan, I don't know her first name, she was the wife of a minister in town, she taught chemistry.

WB: Did you recognize any change in the Hungarian population from grammar school up through your senior year?

EK: Yeah, they were disappearing. There was a solid community, and it got a boost with the '56 uprising when Camp Kilmer was the receiving point. They used the old prison camp barracks to house the Hungarians, and of course we spent a lot of time over there helping process people, bringing food and gifts. Then, you had this infusion, and there was sort of some tension between people who grew up here and the new folks. They were different. They were a different class. [Editor's Note: After Soviet forces crushed the anti-Communist Hungarian Revolution that had begun on October 23, 1956, several hundred thousand Hungarians fled the country. Between December 1956 and May 1957, the United States Army and twenty volunteer and government agencies processed the settlement of 32,000 Hungarian refugees at Camp Kilmer. By 1960, a total of 38,000 Hungarian refugees had fled to the United States. (From James P. Niessen, "Hungarian Refugees of 1956: From the Border to Austria, Camp Kilmer and Elsewhere," 2016)]

WB: You were aware that.

EK: Oh, absolutely.

WB: Really? It was that clear.

EK: Very clear. All of us who were here, our folks were all blue collar. There were some professionals but not many. These were all professionals. These were engineers. These were doctors. I remember, I don't want to use a name because they're local but they came over in '56 and they're my age, the boys. There's two boys. Their father was a doctor. The two boys, one's a physician and one's an attorney. It was just a different class, because they came from college-educated parents, so their understanding and what they experienced [was different]. One went to MIT, one to a six-year medical school program at BU, Boston University. I'm just saying I think they were not the same people coming over here.

There were a few of them, but I think for the people who got over here, they had the financial wherewithal to get over here. If you're lower class or lower-middle class, do you have the financial resources to get out of Hungary? You get your [family] on a boat or a plane, no. It is not unlike my friends who are Iranian who left after the Shah. They're all professionals. It was professionals who left. The Iraqis who came here after the Gulf War, that was the engineers. It was people who had the wherewithal and education. [Editor's Note: In 1979, after a revolution that overthrew the U.S.-backed monarchy of Reza Shah Pahlavi, Iran became an Islamic republic led by clerical forces and Ayatollah Khomeini. The Gulf War began in August 1990, when Iraq invaded Kuwait, and lasted until February 1991, when American-led coalition forces liberated Kuwait and invaded Iraq.]

WB: You were going to school with many of their children.

EK: [Yes].

WB: Was there any perceived difference at school?

EK: Not really. They were all college track. They were all college track, yeah. I think frankly they were more tied to the Hungarian community than I was. They needed anchors more than I needed an anchor. They're more likely to go to church every day or go to the Hungarian festival. It's an interesting thing. I hadn't thought about it in a long time.

WB: Okay.

EK: Of course, then the Hungarian community after that boost began to melt away. I think I'm more typical than atypical. I don't know anybody that I grew up with who sort of hung around in [laughter] their parents' home in perpetuity.

WB: When did you first notice that that was happening?

EK: Oh, you noticed it in the '60s.

WB: Okay.

EK: Yeah, you noticed it by the '60s.

WB: What were some indicators?

EK: The people coming to church were now living in Franklin or Somerset, but they were still tied to this church. Their children were not necessarily going to New Brunswick schools. They were more likely going to Franklin High School or North Brunswick High School or East Brunswick. You began to see it in the '60s. My dad would go to the football games when we'd play East Brunswick or we would play Woodbridge or Edison, and my dad would go to the football game. He'd say, "Oh, here's somebody who's a Hungarian. Here's a Hungarian. Here's a Hungarian. Here's a Hungarian," on the football rosters.

WB: How did you feel about that once you began to notice it?

EK: I had mixed feelings about it because, as I said about the schools and the white flight about the abandonment, I knew then that was not going to end up well. I thought, "Gee, it's unfortunate and I feel angry and it is what it is." Those people were living a different life. There's those of us who grew up here in the city, walked everywhere, took public transportation and so forth. Then, there were the people who went to suburbia. If you go to suburbia, you've got a split level with a car. You're living the American dream. Their experience was different than mine. I'm going to close the loop on something. I told you I graduated from Rutgers. I was heavily involved in student services. I got my hook into Penn State in 1972. I came on a college campus in '68, and here it is, it's 2016 and I haven't left yet. I went to Penn State, got a master's degree and worked out there in facilities, supervising the staff that's stripping wax floors and cleaning the bathrooms and so forth. I picked up my master's, got a full-time job out there, worked out there as a residence life coordinator around a pretty good size complex out there.

WB: You got your master's degree in what?

EK: Student services administration, college administration, financial aid, admissions, career services, residence life, student activities and so forth. I lived on campus. Then, [I] went to then Trenton State College after that, it's full time, coordinator of campus activities. [I] was there during the transition from a state teacher's college to a multi-purpose college [now called The College of New Jersey]. [I] got promoted [and became the] director of student activities, director of residence life, dean of students.

[I] picked up a doctorate along the way, which brings me back to Rutgers. How do you get a doctorate? By the way, you get it because you have a tuition-aid program by your employer.

Then, if it's job related, they'll pay for your tuition. I got into a doctoral program here at Rutgers, part-time. That institution [The College of New Jersey] was very, very good to me. They gave me a leave of absence, paid, to do my dissertation, a very, very giving institution, paid for most of my tuition. It didn't pay for my master's, because I was working out of Penn State. Probably lock, stock and barrel, my undergraduate degree at Rutgers in tuition was, I don't know, sixteen hundred, two thousand bucks.

As I like to point out to my children, I got two thousand bucks into three degrees. I'm very fortunate. I'm very fortunate to be in the right place, geography again, have the right employer. I tell anybody who is working in higher education, if you have aspirations to get a master's degree or a doctorate and you're working at a place and if you're not getting that doctorate, you're never going to get the opportunity again to get it for free. I tell people this all the time. I say that to the secretaries who are working as department secretaries. We have a coordinated master's degree in student services administration, one of the things I do, and most of my students are adult working professionals, fully online. We target mostly women who came in as clerical staff, financial aid office, admissions office, [and] got their associate's degree at a community college. The next thing you know, they got their bachelor's degree and, "I'm going to be the director of financial aid or admissions." They're going to need the master's, and they're going to need to get it while they're working full time. Most institutions of higher learning will have a tuition-aid program.

I came back to Rutgers, and Rutgers was changing. This was the late '70s-early '80s, where it really started to sound like and act like a university. It was growing its entering class. It was beginning to merge the colleges. It was starting to merge the academic departments. It was the days of Bloustein, where he really tried to make it a university. It was still cheap though. Yeah, it was still very cheap. You all may not appreciate this, but I was working at The College of New Jersey, then Trenton State, and I would leave to get here for a five o'clock class. I used to double up my classes. I would take a five o'clock class and I'd take a seven-thirty class, so I would only have to commute up once. My doctoral transcripts don't make sense, because I would take the classes that met less about intentionality and more about convenience. My program was almost, "What can I double up on on Tuesday night?" I used to make it from the college, which is outside Trenton in Ewing Township, to here and find a parking space in thirty-five minutes. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Edward J. Bloustein served as the president of Rutgers University from 1971 until his death in 1989.]

WB: That is pretty good.

EK: Yeah. I was a college administrator. I hit thirty-five, became a father. I was tired of students who wanted to commit suicide at three in the morning. They can't do it conveniently in the afternoon, so you're getting phone calls all the time. [There were] students getting drunk and deciding to pull urinals off and flooding buildings. I just had my fill. I picked up a doctorate, and I was teaching in the School of Business [at The College of New Jersey]. I was able to move to teaching adult programs and actually came back to Rutgers. I taught the Certified Public Manager Program from the mid-'80s through the mid-'90s. It's a certification program out of [the

Edward J.] Bloustein School [of Planning and Public Policy] for public administrators, public managers. I did that for a number of years.

I got seduced into being the director of organizational development and training to take the Department of Transportation in New Jersey from [being] a vertically-integrated organization, take chief bridge engineer, structural assistant chief bridge engineer, bridge engineer, assistant bridge engineer, a vertical organization to a project management [format], where structural engineers were assigned to project teams with electrical engineers and so forth. I took an organization and helped them do the planning associated with reorganizing a pretty complex, large agency. I learned a lot about transportation, a lot, not because I wanted to, but because you had to learn what they did in order to help the organization change.

I was also in charge of employee development, where the first thing I did was create, which I'm very proud of, a tuition-aid program, so any employee, any employee, any employee can get a tuition-aid grant and get paid to go to college for free, any employee, a maintenance worker, a bookkeeper, receptionist. It didn't matter. It's one of the things I'm most proud of in my life. You could take a clerical person and say, "Look, you're a clerical person because things didn't happen outright in the beginning, but now you're older and now you realize you don't want to be a secretary for the rest of your life, so a little bit of your time, a little bit of our time, we'll have accounting classes." We had the professors come right into the building and teach classes at seven-thirty in the morning to nine-thirty. An hour of your time, an hour of our time, we'll pay for the tuition. You'll get twenty-one credits in accounting; we're going to put you into a new career ladder. We'll allow you to get your associate's degree, get your bachelor's degree. The next thing you know, you're going to be the director of procurement. It's one of the best things I did in my life.

That's not why they brought me over. I came over because I knew a lot about public agencies and how they could change. I retired. I'm fortunate to [have], all of those years strung together, almost thirty years in the public sector. When Jon Corzine came in and they wanted to downsize government, they said, "We're looking for people to retire and here's an incentive." I said, "I'm out of here." So, I retired once. [Editor's Note: Jon Corzine served as a U.S. Senator from New Jersey from 2001 to 2006 and then as the governor of New Jersey from 2006 to 2010.]

WB: What year was that?

EK: 2002. That's almost fourteen years ago. That was fourteen years ago. The Certified Public Manager Program, which I ran for Rutgers, went out to bid, and Rutgers didn't get it back. The contract was awarded to Fairleigh Dickinson [University], so I started working for Fairleigh Dickinson. There's not a conflict of interest. [I] can't work for another public agency. I couldn't work for Rutgers. I went up there, coordinated the Certified Public Manager Program for a while. A tenure-track position came up. I became a tenure-track professor at fifty-five. I got tenure a few years ago, and now I teach. I coordinate a program, and I teach adults. It's a different place. I must say it's the most complex place I've worked.

WB: Fairleigh Dickinson?

EK: You bet. [It is] more complex than this, and I worked here, did a lot of work out of the Bloustein School, did some work out of the School of Engineering. I went here twice. I worked at Penn State, worked at The College of New Jersey. It's the most complex place. It's not who most people think it is. It's hardly an undergraduate institution. We'll graduate about 3,800 people this coming year, the majority of which are graduate students. We have campuses in three countries. We're in Canada in Vancouver. We're in England and have been in England for sixty years, a little campus over there. Are you *Downton Abbey* people? [Editor's Note: *Downton Abbey* is a British television series about an aristocratic family living in a grand country estate.] You know what it's about, right? We have one of those buildings. I teach adults, teaching in the evenings, online, weekends. They're complex, because they have four campuses in three countries. They have the traditional undergraduate students. They bring in twelve hundred a year first-time, first-admit students. The rest of the students are adults and graduate students, lots of people who have gone through the community college and are working full time. It's delightful.

My class that I taught last night, so many of them are vets. I've got the person who's a vet who's gotten his bachelor's degree, he works for the State Parole Board and he's the database administrator on pedophiles and predators. I could just listen to these people all day. It'd be very interesting. These are very interesting people. I have a court administrator who's the chief assignment judge's executive assistant for the federal courts out of Newark, and she's one of the students I have. [I teach] the manager of insurance fraud detection for the Department of Banking and Insurance. You've got to approach it differently, trying to have adult conversations. To throw in some other stuff, I have a wife who's an educator.

WB: When did you get married?

EK: 1975.

WB: Where was that in your career?

EK: I had just started working at The College of New Jersey, Trenton State, and my wife had been a graduate assistant in the residence halls there and had graduated with her master's degree in early childhood [education] and was a teacher at a school. I met her at a staff party. She had come back while she was working, and the next thing you know we had a couple of beers and we're dating. We got married about a year later. She was an early childhood educator, preschool head teacher, was the director of a laboratory school on a college campus working with students who wanted to learn about education and glass mirrors and watch and then you go into the classroom and do.

She wrote a bunch of nutrition grants to work with parents about nutrition education. This is back in the late '70s-early '80s, and then she moved her life over to being a bureaucrat in nutrition. She ran the School Lunch Program for New Jersey at the end of her career. She was

the Director of Food and Nutrition and did school lunch, adult daycare feeding, Meals on Wheels, commodities, food banks, excess commodities, all that kind of stuff, so it's about a three-quarters-of-a-billion-dollar operation.

She's a very good example of a person who should have been an accountant, but her option when she went to school in '68 was you go to be a nurse or you go to be an early childhood educator. She's very, very smart. She's very smart. She aced her SATs, and so her parents sent her to Trenton State. Her brother was a beer-drinking fool. He went to Penn [University of Pennsylvania]. He's a good guy. [laughter] This whole thing of what's open and what's opportunity, and it's just mired in the institutional stuff.

WB: What's your wife's name?

EK: Emma. She's retired. She retired in 2010. She ran a large youth sports organization for a while, took them out of financial peril, did another rescue. She still consults in the area of early childhood nutrition, working on a series of federal grants. She's been trying to work on some stuff with the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation on childhood obesity and nutrition stuff. We've been married forty years, and we have one son. He's a good guy. He is now doing his residency in ophthalmology.

When I was in high school, one more high school story, I was on the track team. It was the JV [junior varsity] team, and we're going to go to a track meet. We get on a bus, and we go down Route 1. We get off Route 1. We go through these gates, and we get out of the bus. We just went, "What is this?" I [said], "What is this? What is this place? What is this?" Because it just said Lawrence on the schedule, but it wasn't Lawrence. It was Lawrenceville. Do you know what Lawrenceville is? It's a prep school.

Just to give you a sense, their endowment is larger than Rutgers, as a high school. It's a high school that's got a hockey rink, indoor athletic facility, swimming pool, field house, squash courts, residential. I said, "What is this?" I'm sitting there at the track meet, "Who are you people?" I was curious about college at that point. I said, "How many of you go to college?" How naïve. They said, "Well, all of us go to college." I walked around campus, and it is a campus. It's got a golf course. I see this guy, and I said, "I know him." It was one of the Army brats, who was Hungarian by the way. I said, "Frank." He said, "Bub." I said, "What are you doing here?" He said, "I go to school here." I said, "Where do you live?" He said, "Well, I live here. I live in one of the houses." He gave me the tour, and I'm like, "Wow." It's more college than college. It was one of those like somebody hit me on the side of the head with a baseball bat. There's something that I don't understand at all. I didn't understand this. I don't get this.

WB: What did you not understand?

EK: Who these people were. Where in the hell did they get the money? How do you get into a place like this? [laughter] We went down to the cafeteria, and I went, "Oh, my God." What I didn't understand was that there's a strata of society that I didn't get or didn't understand or didn't

know and had no contact with. There was no one in my life who had that kind of experience, that's all. They use the Harkness system. The Harkness is no classes more than about eight or ten students, and you sit at a table. [Edward] Harkness was an educator out of Yale more than a hundred years ago, and he built these tables. He says, "This is the way learning ought to take place, in a conversation between the master and the student." That's how they teach there. No student hides. Even the math is taught with the Harkness table in the middle in a round room and it's round with then chalkboards or white-off boards and I'm sure now smart boards to work problems.

Students would come in. They each have their assigned board. They work their problems. They would work their way around to critique the work of that problem. The teacher would assign a new problem. They would work them through. The master would take the student who didn't know or the student who did know. It's magic. I don't mean magic, because there's no magic about it. There's no magic about it. [laughter] It's mentoring. It's coaching with constant feedback. It's identifying rapidly what you don't know and closing the gap instantaneously. I say that to say my own son's experience is Lawrenceville, because I said he wasn't going to get beat up in school. It opened a different set of possibilities. I feel uncomfortable about it. I don't think it's right, but it is what it is.

I worked at places. I work at a university that's all about access. There is just a different set of rules that are going on for a small strata of people. I just saw the performance gap close on him in math and science. He went from not being able to write at all to being a writing whiz. I'd love to tell you he's just brilliant, but I don't think they are smart people. I don't think there are. I think they're people who sort of get it earlier that get tuned and coached and mentored, and like anything else, if you do something and pay attention long enough, hard enough and focus on it, you're going to get okay at it. He's done very, very well because of it. I was involved, for a very brief period of time until he passed away, with one of my professors from the graduate school here. He passed away. His name is Sam Proctor, and Sam is pretty well known in education.

There might be some scholarships here at the University. I was very blessed to have him as a professor. He had been a college president, Virginia Union and North Carolina A&T. He was the minister of [Abyssinian Baptist Church in Harlem], and he was a distinguished professor here. I mean, he was a connected, real-deal guy. He taught a college course on the "American College Presidency," and we had William Bowen and him teach it, William Bowen was the president of Princeton, every Tuesday night. [laughter] It was a little president's club. [Editor's Note: Samuel DeWitt Proctor served as a professor at Rutgers from 1969 to 1984. Proctor held the Martin Luther King, Jr. Chair in the Graduate School of Education and also taught in the Department of Africana Studies as a visiting professor. William G. Bowen served as the president of Princeton University from 1972 to 1988.]

Sam Proctor, when he died, actually before he passed away, he felt that a residential prep school-like institution would be a great way to do a charter school. For a period of time and while he was still alive, I was involved in trying to transform what was the old Katzenbach School for the Deaf into a residential charter school that mirrored the Lawrenceville School and they would

share faculty and so forth. The cost to run was too much. The cost to run was too much, couldn't pull it off. The legacy of that is, however, the Lawrenceville School has this incredible program now that a guy named (Donald Bryan?), who was the former vice president of CBS, runs, that creates the bridges and links to students from disadvantaged circumstances into Lawrenceville.

It's amazing, amazing stuff because I'm convinced as long as there's some degree of motivation, you can take anybody and put them in a rich environment that is twenty-four-seven and eventually you'll get there because there's no downtime. You go to school. You go to classes. You have breakfast. Everybody goes to class. The entire community has lunch together, everybody. The guys who cut the grass, everybody has lunch together. You go to class in the afternoon. Everybody's required to be an athlete of some sort. You've got to be in shape, so everybody from three-thirty to five-thirty is doing some sort of sport or athletic or workout or running or whatever. Then from six-thirty to nine-thirty is mandatory study every night. You have, in your house, and even if you're a commuter student living at home, you've got to stay there until nine-thirty at night.

There's tutors. There's masters there. They call them masters. They're there. They're on duty. There's classes on Saturday. [laughter] It's just this system. To my chagrin, I'm bemoaning the demise of the small liberal arts colleges, because that's what you get at a residential college. You get this intensity, and there's not a chance that you're going to fall out of the radar screen. The classes are small, you live on campus, "Why weren't you in class today?" Professors, particularly at the freshman or sophomore level, don't really care whether you come to class or not. Nobody's there to be like, "Why weren't you at the calc [calculus] class today?" [laughter] That's just one less set of exams I have to grade.

I haven't quite figured out, but I'll figure it out before I do this much longer because there's going to be an upheaval in higher education. It's already happening. There's a downturn in traditional-age students for the next ten years. There will be fewer students going to college. I think the price point for the privates has outreached the average family's ability to pay. I think there's going to be an upheaval. I think we're going to see institutions closing. Sweet Briar [College] is going to close. It's a women's college in Virginia, gorgeous, just everything that I described, except they didn't have students because it's too expensive.

You see that institutions that were small are having difficulty paying the bills because there's too much overhead. Even places like Rider, I don't know if you've read in the newspaper, that they're laying off twenty-two faculty because they haven't made their freshman class in five years. Drew has not made its freshman class, they were six hundred entering, they're down to three hundred entering and you can't run an institution with that few students for very long. They have a huge endowment, but they can't do it. I suspect there's going to be a big, not big, nothing happens instantaneously. A lot of people have been pretending to be institutions of higher learning, and that's come home to roost with the scams associated with financial aid. You recruit somebody to go into a nursing program, bundle them up with debt and you then wait for a good year and then you give them organic chemistry and they fail out and you just bring in the

next group. These are for-profit places, and all you walk away with is 45,000 dollars-worth of debt and nothing else. Some of that stuff is going to have to change. I'm sorry. Did I miss anything?

WB: I want to go back and talk about your senior thesis project.

EK: Yeah, sure.

WB: How did it come about? What was it? What were your findings?

EB: I wanted to be a Henry Rutgers Scholar, but my department was not participating at the time. I'm not sure why. I thought, "Gee, that'd be great." You'd go to a seminar every week, but my department was not large enough, frankly. I don't know what the reason was, but we didn't have that as an option. I was interested in doing a senior project thesis, and I had a professor. I can remember his first name, since I called him Stan. I'll remember his last name in a few seconds. He said, "I'd be glad to mentor you through this." He taught a class on "Minority and Intergroup Relations," and he talked a lot about assimilation in American life. I proposed the idea that I'd like to find out a little bit about the Hungarian community here. I know quite a bit, but I'd like to do it from a researcher's perspective.

I wrote a proposal in my junior year that would take a look from an institutional perspective; that's what I proposed as an organizational framework. It would be the political side of the Hungarian community here in New Brunswick, the church, religious side of the community here, the economic side of it. I proposed the cultural enterprise of it. What do people do for fun? The last one got mired a bit. I organized myself around those and did a little bit of history and current status of the churches, all the churches that were predominantly Hungarian, at least bilingual services. The political side, how did the Hungarians get into the political loop and how did they influence at least local elections and how did they get their boy into the town council or commission. I tell a little bit about the social-cultural stuff, focused in a little bit about the Hungarian American Athletic Club.

There were these athletic groups. The German league, the Irish league and it was mostly around soccer, what we would know as soccer. There were these soccer leagues going back to the turn of the last century. In these leagues, Germans would play Germans, and Hungarians would play Hungarians. Then, the Germans would play the Hungarians. There were soccer fields in New Brunswick at most of the parks, that these leagues on a Sunday afternoon would compete against each other. I did some work on the Hungarian American Athletic Club. At one time, they had the full range of not only soccer [but also] softball, bowling, fencing. They're still here. They're still over there with a brand new building that Robert Wood Johnson [University Hospital] built for them, because they took their old building. I did a thesis. It was less than a thesis, because there was not a hypothesis. It was much more of a historical perspective of the evolution of the Hungarian community in New Brunswick.

There was an introduction. Why did the Hungarians show up here? Whole towns were recruited by either J&J or a cigar factory to come over here to work. They would pay their way over. They'd arrange or get involved in the community, find places to live, and they'd get hooked into the churches. They would work at Squibb or Johnson & Johnson or one of the industries in town here.

The reason this is called Hub City is because it's a hub. It's a transportation hub. You have initially the King's Highway, and the King's Highway went from Trenton, the highest navigable point on the Delaware River, to New Brunswick, which is the highest navigable point on the Raritan River. You connected Philadelphia and New York. You began to have at least trading that would take place, this being a central location. Of course, there was a ferry down here at 27, Route 27, going across that would help move the commerce for those who wanted to stay on the King's Highway. That went all the way to New York. Then, you had the Delaware and Raritan Canal that followed a more circuitous route from New Brunswick to Trenton, and it comes in this way through the northwest part of town.

You have the rail line. The first commercial rail line was actually port to port. It was Perth Amboy to Camden, but then the main line was Philadelphia, Trenton to New Brunswick to New York [and] up to New Haven, Boston, and [then] Baltimore, Washington, and so you have that main line. Then, there was the old Route 1, which is 27. Then, you have the new Route 1. If you look at Route 1, it's a straight line. You get on in New Brunswick at the Raritan River. If you could go up a lot of feet in the air, it's a straight shot. It is a straight shot to Trenton. It is just straight. It parallels the train line. Then, of course, you have the Turnpike. It's always been here. It's been a massive transportation hub, less so now. It stopped being a hub some years ago.

WB: What sources did you consult for your research?

EK: This kind. It was this. It was oral interviews. I did oral interviews with ministers and people who were elected officials, people who had been elected officials. I had interviews with pharmacy owners. Right at the top of the street here, I interviewed the two guys, they were Hungarian, and they owned the pharmacy up here. One was Hungarian, and one took lessons here at Rutgers in Hungarian, so he could service the customers. I talked to businessmen, business owners, the ones that had been around for a while. The athletic clubs, some of them I got documents, some original documentation. It was easiest for the churches.

The tenth anniversary, the twenty-fifth anniversary, the fiftieth anniversary, they all had booklets. They all had the history of the place. It was pretty easy to extrapolate out of from some of those original documents. Somebody else had done something similar about the Hungarian community for her master's or doctoral thesis here back in the early '60s. I thought it was tremendously inaccurate to an outsider. I don't want to be critical, but it was like, "What? Are you kidding?"

WB: Do you mean that you feel like she had not actually consulted people in the community?

EK: Well, I think she did. Maybe they weren't as revealing, nor did she know what to ask because she didn't know. How could you have Hungarian Baptists? [laughter] Her list of churches was short, and I'm saying, "No, no." There's a Baptist church. They take full swimming pool christenings, [laughter] but it's in Hungarian.

WB: The things that you grew up knowing in the community.

EK: Knowing. I just knew.

WB: Right.

EK: I just knew. Like the HAAC, the Hungarian American Athletic Club, was absent when talking about leisure activities. Of course, there's a problem with me growing up here and then writing about it because it's certainly going to be biased, but I think she just missed stuff because she didn't know. It's the old person who's got blinders on who is feeling the elephant, and what are you feeling? What part of the elephant are you feeling? I thought it was not terribly accurate, or there were parts of it that were missing more than inaccurate. That was the approach. There wasn't a defense. I submitted it. I went to an office on this floor where I then had a conversation with him, and then the department chair came in. There were some bells-and-whistles sociologists here then.

I was very fortunate to have Matilda [White] Riley, I don't know where this is coming from, but I had this woman whose name is Matilda Riley, who essentially was the lead author in inventing sociological research. Her husband was at Columbia. She was here. They were at the forefront in the '50s and '60s of inventing some of the field-based research. I was very fortunate. I had a woman named Anne Foner, who was remarkably good in sociological theory. There were some people that were pretty well known in the sociology community. For whatever reason, many of them came. Higher education, back then, I think it was much more fluid. People came and went. I think things were a little bit less formal.

I reflect back, I remember when I first worked at The College of New Jersey, I was looking at faculty members going through the tenure and review process, and it didn't seem much of a review process. My submission for tenure filled four binders for peer review, you know, every committee I sat on and its minutes, every program I did, every curriculum that I wrote, and just every article I had published, every poster board presentation, not every copy of PowerPoint presentation, but stuff. It was huge. It was four binders.

It was much more informal I think. Maybe I'm wrong. Maybe if I was a faculty member in 1968, I would be saying, "Are you kidding me?" [laughter] Back in the '60s, a sociologist out of Columbia said, "Being a faculty member and then being involved in faculty politics is so vicious because the stakes are so low." If you've heard that or some variation of it. I may be wrong on that. Okay, folks, do you have anything else for me, questions, notes, quotes or anecdotes?

WB: Is there anything that you feel like you should be saying that we have not asked you?

EK: I think I just want to end it with where I started it, which is I feel very fortunate to have been born two blocks away [from] Rutgers. Rutgers and being part of the community from the beginning, from grammar school on, really set me right for the rest of my life, and I'm thankful all the time that I happened to be born on third base so getting home wasn't that hard. I feel very, very grateful to Rutgers, in spite of its shortcomings as a public institution.

WB: Well, thank you for visiting with us.

EK: Yeah.

SM: Thank you.

EK: Thank you. I know you all want to eat.

-----END OF TRANSCRIPT-----

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 2/22/2016
Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 10/31/2017
Reviewed by Ernest Kovacs 7/5/2019
Reviewed by Zach Batista 8/27/2019