RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JEFFREY RUBIN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Dr. Jeffrey Rubin, on May 28, 2020, with Kate Rizzi. This is our second interview session, as a part of the Class of 1970 Oral History Project. Thank you so much for meeting with me again today.

Jeffrey Rubin: Sure.

KR: Yesterday, we left off talking about your undergraduate years at Rutgers College. We were discussing professors.

JR: Yes.

KR: You were going to tell a story about a professor who made a big impact upon you.

JR: Yes. We're a little out of time sequence here, but I might as well get this one in and then maybe come back to some others along the way. I think, as I explained at the last interview, I ended up taking, again, don't hold me to the timeframes, but I think it was in my junior year that I ended up taking [economics], "Intro Micro," "Intro Macro" sequence, mainly to fulfill a social science requirement and found the material interesting.

I don't remember if I talked to anybody about it or I just decided--I don't know if we needed a minor at that time or not--but that I would just take some more econ classes in my senior year. I'm assuming it was the fall of 1969, I took, among other things, "Intermediate Microeconomics" with an adjunct professor named Larry Falk, F-A-L-K. He used a book by [Charles E.] Ferguson, maybe somebody else. The interesting part is, the Ferguson book was basically intermediate micro with graphical analysis in the text but calculus in the footnotes. Having made it through enough math to understand the calculus, it was one of those, like I described also [with] the Chinese literature and the Greek and Roman, here is something I learned in math that I could now apply in some way that was different than what I thought was abstract math I was learning. So, the stuff was fascinating. It was really easy for me, partly because of the calculus, and [it] just came easy. I understood it, and I did well in that class. [Editor's Note: Laurence "Larry" Falk served as an assistant professor in the Rutgers College Economics Department and an associate professor in the Economics Department at Hunter College of CUNY. He later worked as a research economist in the Office of Economic Policy for the State of New Jersey. He died in 2010 at the age of eighty-one.]

I don't know if it was the final exam or maybe was one of what, in those days, we called hourly exams. They call them midterms typically now. We used to call them hourlies. In the blue book, he wrote something to the effect, "You seem to have some ability in this material. Have you considered going to graduate school?" It was like, my background and my family, that was just unheard of. I had no idea, just like I tell people, I had no idea, I could've grown up and been like Mel Allen and been an announcer for the Yankees, that that was a job you could actually get. I also had no idea you could grow up and become a professor, and that was a job you could actually get. It just wasn't in the frame of reference for me. [Editor's Note: Mel Allen (1913-1996) was the play-by-play radio announcer for the New York Yankees from 1939 to 1964.]

At some point, I talked to some people in economics and applied to graduate school with not a very good GPA [grade point average] overall, but with the math background--at that time, economics was moving from being what might be called institutional economics to a much heavier [emphasis on the] mathematical and statistics--people with some math background, I think, had a little bit of an edge applying to graduate school, and I got in several places.

Nobody gave me money--although I don't know if Rutgers did or not--nobody gave me money, which was unusual. So, I would have had to pay, I think, it was fifteen hundred for tuition and take care of my own room and board. I got accepted at Duke. It turned out there was a professor in the Economic Department at Rutgers named Roy Weintraub, whose father was a very famous economist at Penn, who was one of Joe Seneca's instructors, I think, keeping the loop together here, who had been recruited and was leaving to go to Duke. For me, there was at least someone who would be there that I knew. [Editor's Note: Eliot Roy Weintraub is Professor Emeritus of Economics at Duke University. He joined the Duke faculty in 1970 after a brief stay at Rutgers. His father, Sidney Weintraub, served as a Professor of Economics at the University of Pennsylvania. Joseph Seneca, an alumnus of the University of Pennsylvania, is a Professor Emeritus of Economics at Rutgers. From 1991 to 2003, Seneca served as the Vice President for Academic Affairs.]

I actually had gone to Duke in the spring [of 1970], and it was a really weird [interview]. I met with the graduate director. I didn't know what to ask and he didn't know what to tell me and it was thirty minutes, it seemed like, and I turned around and drove eight hours back. The campus was unbelievable. So, I did it. I always tell people, if I went through the whole interview process, trying to find a job, if I had had any luck actually getting a real job offer, I probably would've done that and not gone to graduate school. But I literally had no other options. Like I said, I could've kept looking for a job, but I was just sort of floundering. Graduate school made a lot of sense.

Then, just jumping ahead a little bit, that first year in graduate school was just wonderful. Everybody was just so much into the material. We'd get these homework problem assignments and we'd come back and we'd work on them and talk about them. It was just like I described about my son. Everybody was interested in the same thing, and they were all really smart. It was fun.

I always say to people, I have to keep reminding myself of this, that I think we had a class of about twenty and then you pass prelims [preliminary exams] and I think ten of us made it and ten didn't. It was really based on how you did in the exams, and to this day, I'm amazed I got through, but here I am. [laughter] Obviously, I was better than at least ten other people in the class.

It took me a little time to finish my dissertation. I finished my coursework. I came back [to New Jersey]. We'll go through the personal history. I ended up getting married in '73. I started at Duke in '70. With a little pushing from my wife, I ended up getting the dissertation done in '75. Professionally, it probably would've been better if I had stayed at Duke and took more courses and did more work with people, but we had gotten introduced in October 1972 and we decided to get married. She had a job in Piscataway, and so I tried to do it semi-remotely, before the year of

remote learning and so on. [Editor's Note: This refers to the shift in education to distance or remote learning during the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020.]

That is a quick summary of that, but it all came from that note in a blue book from Falk. Going back to something else I said last time, I used to tell that story to TAs [teaching assistants] and adjuncts that we hired; everything you say to a student can matter in their lives. Just a passing comment that you don't think means much gets the wheels turning for them in a way that's totally unexpected. I remember a student who ended up--I don't know if she was in senior honors with me or I had her in a class or whatever--she had gotten admitted to Penn Law School and she was just struggling with the idea, "Could I actually, as someone from Rutgers, could I make it at Penn Law School?" I was like, "Of course, you could." It was so obvious she could. It was a classic underselling of themselves by Rutgers people that you see so much among undergraduates who went to Rutgers and not to an Ivy League school or another highly-rated school, that they just didn't think they were as smart or well prepared. We would always ask our former undergraduates, who went to graduate school, how they felt we were doing in preparing them, and they said, "Oh, we were much better."

Plus, there was the notion that to make it at Rutgers, you had to work extra hard and nothing was handed to you, whereas some of the other people who came from the other schools and graduate schools didn't have the same, I don't know if you want to call it, training but personal experience that the Rutgers people did. You can't quantify it and you almost don't want to advertise that that's a Rutgers trait, but we saw it over and over and over again. They would say, "You guys made me work really hard here," et cetera. There were no easy "A's," especially in economics. It was a tough grading. So, the people who were really smart got good grades, were really smart, and they could compete against anybody. We'll talk a little bit later about how we did with that Fed Challenge team, but let's go back and do some more about the time at Rutgers because I think that's what we want to get on the record.

KR: What other professors stick out in your mind?

JR: So, the two that I always talk about are Terry Butler, who was a math professor, and, I guess, in looking at the yearbook, was one of the more radical professors, anti-war, and Harold Poor, who was a history professor. The Butler story, I had Butler, again, this is my recollection, for "Differential Calculus," and as I said earlier, I struggled with calculus. Butler was a young guy, thin, dark black beard, came into class, no notes, and he started and he went for eighty minutes. He and I, at least it seemed to me, were on the same wavelength. It was just everything he said I got, and solving differential equations didn't seem to be all that difficult. It was one of the few times you get that experience, where it just comes natural, but he was just stunning. He and I met many times after I came back to Rutgers. We had lunch or [I] met him at different events and we chatted. I think he taught into his eighties and was still going strong, but he was an incredible instructor. [Editor's Note: Terence Butler is a Distinguished Professor Emeritus of Mathematics at Rutgers. He joined the faculty at Rutgers in 1958. He served as chair of the Rutgers College Math Department from 1974 to 1981 and then as associate dean for Mathematical Sciences in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences until 1993. (From "A History of Mathematics at Rutgers," by Charles Weibel)]

Harold Poor, I don't remember whether I had him for Western civ [civilization] or I had taken another history class, but he's one of the few people I took at Rutgers because of who was teaching the course, not the material, not the subject. I took a course, I think it was "German History Since 1815" or something, and I think the author of the book was [Koppel S.] Pinson, if I can remember, which I threw the books out as I was moving on. Well, he came in, I don't know if he had a scarf or something wrapped around, he had the sport jacket, probably with the suede elbow pads and the scarf, and he would sort of make an entrance, at least, again, in my recollection. The episode in class, and it was one of the big lecture halls, I don't know if it was Records Hall, when he read from a Holocaust memoir, he was literally crying at the end as he got through it. It's one of those things that sticks with you. I don't remember the memoir. I don't remember what it said. I remember his reaction. [Editor's Note: Harold L. Poor served as a Professor of History at Rutgers College from 1966 until 1991, when he retired due to health complications from AIDS. He died on January 24, 1992. The Harold Poor Prize is awarded by the History Department to the top three undergraduate honors theses.]

Yes, he was excellent, and I think I said to you before we started that one of my regrets was not [going to visit him]. When I got back to Rutgers, he was close by. He was just over in Van Dyck [Hall]. We were in New Jersey Hall, and I never went over there. Then, he passed away relatively young, and I never got to say something to him. I did, by the way, interestingly, when Larry Falk passed away, I sent a note to his daughter and told her the story. She appreciated that.

I also had Joe Seneca, but I had him in the spring semester of my senior year for "Econometrics." I don't know if I've already said, but I spent seven to ten days of that semester in the health center with mono, and then classes got cancelled sometime in late April or May. I wasn't in class all that much that semester. Joe went on--if you meet any alums who had "Intro Econ," they may not remember anybody, but they always remember Joe. In a big class, he just always left them with the impression he was talking to each of them individually. Students may remember some of us for things we did or assignments or topics, but him, they always knew his name. If you ran into anybody and you'd say, "Who did you have?" it was Sid Simon, maybe Monroe Berkowitz, but, more often than not, it was Joe Seneca. [Editor's Note: Sidney Simon (1911-1997) was a Professor of Economics who taught at Rutgers for forty-five years. Monroe Berkowitz (1919-2009) served as a professor in the Department of Economics, where he was chair for many years, and director of the Bureau of Economic Research.]

Those were the main ones. I remember a guy I had for "Numerical Analysis," and he called me out for doing a sloppy job on a paper. It was one of those things, you thought you were doing something okay and he kind of said, "No, you could do better and this wasn't really up to the level." I can remember reading that. I've had a few of those in my lifetime with submitting papers and things. It's tough criticism, but it's important criticism for people to get and for somebody to be honest and say, "It's just not good enough. You can do better," and send it back. When we get past my undergraduate years and we come back to coming to Rutgers, I'll talk about how working with someone helped me do that too.

KR: How much contact did you have with deans or higher-up administrators?

JR: Very little. Early on, I probably saw some people because I was on probation. I remember Howard Crosby. I remember being in the dean's office and a big counter there. I guess it was Howard Crosby. I don't know if I met with advisors there. I remember we had an advisor in the math department, I think a woman, Nickerson, I think her name was, who you would go to for advice. I don't remember any particular great advice and I don't remember any particular great advice other than what I had to do to get off probation maybe, at the dean's office. I tried to stay away from needing to see a dean. [laughter] Again, I don't remember if I had to go there. I know I was excited, at some point, when I got the letter and made dean's list a couple times. [Editor's Note: Howard Crosby joined Rutgers College as an administrator in 1941. He was appointed the Dean of Men in 1964 and then became the Dean of Students in 1968. Helen Nickerson (1918-1990) was a Professor of Math at Douglass College. She joined the faculty in 1960.]

The story, I guess, I have to get in is--and, again, this was typical or I think it still is typical of a lot of first generation but even other students who go to college, especially at Rutgers--there comes a time when you have some kind of awakening, and the anecdote that I tell is, again, I think it was my brother who told me this. He said you could go to college for one of two reasons; one reason was to graduate and the other was to get an education. Many of our students come to Rutgers simply to graduate, but often by their sophomore, junior year, something happens and they decide, this would be a great place to get an education and not worry just about getting a degree and not worry just about getting a job, which is one of the reasons I'm a big fan--I really think everybody should be forced to take a year off before college. Most people aren't ready, but that was me.

I remember playing golf one time at Rutgers and getting paired up with somebody who turned out to be a former student, who was a senior maybe. Again, a frequent comment was like, "If I knew then what I know now, I would've paid so much more attention in your class. I would've taken different classes. I would've done different things, but I was eighteen. I just got to college. There was all this other stuff." No matter how much people tell them, this is what you do, you have to figure it out on your own and you have to have that experience that I got from Butler or Poor or in the Greek and Roman or in the Chinese literature, something that says, "Wouldn't it be nice to take some of these things just to learn something?" Maybe it'll pay off, maybe it won't, but that isn't the reason to do it; just learn something, get interested in something. It got worse and worse, I think, at Rutgers, to the point where I was doing either an orientation session or one of the selling sessions in the spring, where Rutgers was trying to recruit honors students, and some kid wanted to know [laughter] what internship he could get in between graduating from high school and starting college so that he could get going. I said, "Just relax." I think the parents all had a heart attack. I said, "Don't think too much about that stuff. Smart kids are going to do well and kids who work hard are going to do well, and you don't know what experience is going to end up being the one that changes your life."

Some people come in and they've got it all sort of planned out, but others sort of struggle with it. But what we were seeing with the high school kids was just obsessive, I thought, after a while, about getting things on their resume. I mean, my son had a friend whose mother spent twelve years making sure she would get into Princeton. We never pressured the kids that way. I'm sure they felt some pressure certainly to go to college, like we did. My parents, that was a pretty clear

thing, you didn't have a choice. But some of the stuff and what they were doing was ridiculous, although my son did have a nice summer project with a medical doctor, somebody that I knew, but that's a different story.

KR: During your years at Rutgers, the Vietnam War was escalating. In your circle of friends, what were the discussions that you had about the war and how it might affect you in the near future?

JR: So, I was pretty agnostic about the whole thing other than probably being scared out of mind about--there's no way I was going to be in the Army. It was just bizarre. I did have a friend who joined the Reserves, and for some reason, I never looked into it. There was always this rumbling of people going to Canada, and there was always people who were joining the Reserves to get out of active duty. I just didn't do anything, and I [thought] wait and see what happens. I just couldn't imagine myself in uniform. I was not brought up as a fighter, and it wasn't my personality. I would have gotten crushed if I ended up in boot camp. But, who knows, maybe I would've been a totally different person. I can't say I spent a lot of time senior year worrying about it, although, again, in reviewing the history, I guess it was in December of '69 when they did the lottery. Although I used to tell people, I was 110, it turned out, when I went back and looked at a chart, I think I was 102. At some point, I got the call. I got the notice that I had to go to Newark for a physical. [Editor's Note: On December 1, 1969, the U.S. Selective Service held the Vietnam draft lottery, which was broadcast live on television and radio. The lottery selected birthdays to determine the order in which men born between 1944 and 1950 were called to report for induction in 1970 during the Vietnam War.]

I had skin rashes that were probably due to nerves or other things. There are a number of hypotheses, but I periodically broke out in these bad rashes. They never actually told you that that was enough, but at the end of the day, they stamped your card 4-F and I was done. That was that. So, that was my experience. I was free and clear and basically healthy. I didn't make it up. There weren't bone spurs. I didn't see a doctor to tell, "Find something." I had a problem and it was pretty bad when it happened, and I guess you wouldn't want that to happen on the frontlines. So, they didn't need me, and that was the end of my experience with it. My brother, who was older, I don't know whether he was past that age or married and maybe he was doing engineering and they had a deferment at some point because he was doing nuclear powerplants, so maybe that was why he didn't get picked. [Editor's Note: 4-F is a draft classification that means "Registrant not qualified for military service."]

One of the things that would gall me to this day is people who would skateboard on the Vietnam Memorial by Scott Hall at Rutgers. It was like nobody pays any attention to what it represents and what it means. I don't know what they can do. They now have this nice I think it's a World War II one, that they built with stones, but the Vietnam one is sort of hidden there. It's damaged from people riding skateboards on it. You see, there really weren't, in the whole scheme of things, that many people who were at Rutgers who were killed in Vietnam. I think my wife would probably say that she had more Plainfield High School kids that she knew and I don't know about Hoboken High School, where I went, but I suspect those were the kids who didn't go to college who got drafted and were the ones who were killed over there. If it's two dozen on that Vietnam Memorial at Rutgers, it's a lot. For whatever reason, people ended up not serving

or not serving in combat or whatever. [Editor's Note: In 1995, the Class of 1965 funded the construction of the Vietnam War Memorial on Voorhees Mall, outside of Scott Hall. There are sixteen names of Rutgers alumni engraved in the granite of the memorial. In 2007, the Class of 1942 funded the construction of a World War II Memorial adjacent to the Vietnam War Memorial.]

KR: What do you remember about activism on campus, anti-war activism, civil rights activism?

JR: Again, embarrassingly relatively little. I do remember, being, maybe for other reasons, but I remember being an observer rather than a participant on Hamilton Street--it's kind of interesting because I ended up spending most of my career in New Jersey Hall on Hamilton Street--but right on Hamilton Street, where New Jersey Hall was, watching a protest [on] Old Queens, filled with students from Old Queens all the way down to Hamilton Street. The person I was with didn't see the curb and thought she broke her ankle, but it turned out to be a bad sprain. That's kind of the recollection of what happened. I don't remember what people were saying. We were there. I don't know what happened. I see people in our reunion class talked about the bombing at ROTC. I read about it, but I can't recall. [Editor's Note: In 1969, the Rutgers Army ROTC building on College Avenue was firebombed by members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS).]

Again, I was off campus. I was looking for a job. I was applying for graduate school. I was in a relationship. All that stuff that was happening on College Avenue outside of the classroom. This was a time I was discovering economics and thinking maybe I wanted to go to graduate school and trying to make sure I passed everything and could graduate and if my GPA was going to be high enough so that I could get admitted. I was focused on all that stuff way more.

It was interesting, yesterday's *Wall Street Journal* had an article on the Grinnell College Class of 1970, and it turned out, just like us, their reunion, fiftieth reunion, was cancelled, but their graduation was also cancelled. They profile several people, and there was one of them, who I could identify with, who said she had too much on her plate to be concerned with the activism and the protests that were going on, on campus. I identified with that, whereas some of the other people there in the story were much more actively involved. I've heard this at the [Class of 1970] reunion committee. I mean, some people there have great recollections of being heavily involved and knowing about these things and even planning some of them, I think. But it wasn't part of my life in '69-'70. Again, part of it was mono, part of it was doing a physical for the Army. I'm trying to think what else. I mean, I can't, again, recall specifics. As I said, I looked in the yearbook and the month-by-month stuff, the speakers, it wasn't on my radar at that point.

KR: I am just curious, that first draft lottery in December of 1969, did you watch it on television?

JR: I think so. I can't remember. I'm sure we did. I'm sure everybody did. I had an apartment at the time, so if it wasn't winter break, I'm sure that's where I was, but I don't remember. I remember thinking, was it going to be over a hundred or under a hundred that they were going to end up calling? So, I wasn't quite sure whether I would get called up or not. But, again, stuff happened. I didn't make stuff happen. Stuff happened to me. I got the letter, I went to the draft board in Newark and did the whole physical and, as I said, at the end of the line, I was 4-F.

[Editor's Note: The highest draft number called upon in 1970 was 195. However, physicals did occur for individuals up to the draft number of 215.]

KR: What speakers do you remember going and seeing when you were an undergrad?

JR: I think these were all ones when I was an undergraduate. I saw Hillary Clinton for the first campaign. I was really impressed. I said, "She should be running." She was amazing, right outside Scott Hall. But I saw Hubert Humphrey, and I'm assuming these were during our years. Again, what I recollect most, there were snipers on Murray Hall and Van Dyck, outside of where he was speaking. I don't know if this was in a protest about the war or if it was during the election campaign. The election was '68, so maybe it was the lead up to the '68 election. But there was already the Eugene McCarthy stuff going on, who apparently was at Rutgers, but I don't think I was there for that. So, that's what I remember about Hubert Humphrey. [Editor's Note: Hillary Clinton gave a speech at Voorhees Mall at Rutgers in 1992 during Bill Clinton's presidential campaign. Vice President Hubert Humphrey spoke at the Rutgers bicentennial convocation on September 22, 1966.]

Muhammad Ali was there, I think, our junior year in Records Hall. The one thing I remember about that, he had introduced the Ali shuffle, which was this quick movement of his feet and then his hands moving quickly. I was there with my cousin. Ali does this, and maybe five minutes later, my cousin says, "When is he going to do this Ali shuffle?" I said, "You missed it. He did it." It was so fast. You didn't even see it. He was pretty impressive. I had seen him on the street in New York, I think earlier, which was just an odd experience because he would sort of gather on the street corner and he would just go on and on. He was in the middle of changing his name and protesting and going to jail, I guess, for not serving in the war. [Editor's Note: Muhammad Ali spoke in Records Hall in 1967. Born Cassius Marcellus Clay, Jr. on January 14, 1942, he converted to Islam and changed his name in 1964. Ali won a gold medal at the 1960 Olympic Games in Rome, and he became the heavyweight boxing champion in 1964. On April 28, 1967, Ali refused to be inducted into the Army during the Vietnam War. After being convicted of draft evasion, Ali was sentenced to prison, fined, and banned from boxing for three years. In 1971, the Supreme Court overturned Ali's conviction. Ali went on to reclaim the heavyweight title several more times before retiring in the early 1980s.]

Then, the other one I talked about was Barry Goldwater, and it was a packed house in the College Avenue Gym. I remember somebody getting up in the balconies, screaming out, "You're a goddamn fascist bastard." The crowd went, "Ohhh," however you transcribe that. [laughter] Goldwater said, "Shh," something to the effect of, "You can call me a fascist if you want, but if you call me a bastard again, I'll meet you outside." The crowd went crazy, clapping [makes a clapping sound]. It made a strong impression on me. It may not be the way it actually happened, but that's the way I remember it happening. [Editor's Note: Barry Goldwater was a Republican politician who represented Arizona in the Senate from 1953 to 1964 and again from 1969 to 1987. He ran for the presidency in the 1964 election, losing to Lyndon B. Johnson in a landslide.]

Then, I do remember going to some of the big faculty meetings. I saw yearbook pictures of those faculty meetings, where they were very different than later on when I was a faculty

member, where these debates about the war occurred. Sid Simon, who was very pro-government, pro-war, I guess, was one of the few voices in opposition to the protests and some of the public statements and whatever the faculty was trying to do. Professor Susman, in history, I don't know if he was there when you were at Rutgers, but I ended up getting the Warren Susman Teaching Award years later. When I got the award, it was sort of interesting, because I said, "I actually knew who [Susman was]." I didn't really know him well, but I knew who Warren Susman was. I could've picked him out of a crowd. So, again, what goes around comes around a little bit there. So, those are vague recollections of those faculty meetings, where students would go and attend, which isn't the case anymore. I guess there are Senate meetings where students go, but it's totally different than what it was in '69 and '70. [Editor's Note: Warren Susman served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1960 to 1985. He died of a heart attack while addressing the national convention of the Organization of American Historians in Minneapolis. The Warren I. Susman Award for Excellence in Teaching is Rutgers University's highest honor for tenured faculty being recognized for their teaching.]

KR: How about bands and concerts? Do you remember going to any at Rutgers?

JR: You know, I was not in the marijuana drug-using group and I wasn't in the long-hair hippie thing. I think the first concert I ever saw was The Moody Blues at Duke and they were great, in Cameron Indoor Stadium of all places, before it was Cameron Indoor Stadium where it really mattered. Duke did not have a very good basketball team in those days. Other than going to that Rutgers effort to do a Rutgers Jazz Festival, which there were maybe fifty people in the world who were actually there, at the stadium for that, I don't know if I went to any other concerts. I was much more interested in following basketball or baseball. I was a Beatles fan, listened to the music, had a bunch of Beach Boys albums and Judy Collins albums and listened to both of those kinds of things. I can still sing [those songs]; it's amazing how much the lyrics come back, if those songs come on the radio. [Editor's Note: Cameron Indoor Stadium is the indoor arena and home court of Duke basketball. It opened in 1940 as Duke Indoor Stadium and was renamed in 1972 for Eddie Cameron, a long-time coach and athletic director at Duke.]

For years, my Volkswagen radio didn't work and I would ride around with a little transistor radio. There was a little, over the glove compartment in the Volkswagen, there was a handle, I guess for somebody to hold on to, but I propped the transistor radio up because I couldn't afford to get the car fixed and I'd ride around with this transistor radio playing in the car. I don't know how many years that went on. I liked music, but it wasn't a way I was going to spend money either. We didn't have lots of money. I wasn't quite sure how my parents ever afforded the original four hundred dollars for the Corvair or the nineteen hundred dollars, I think, my junior year or my senior year for the Volkswagen. So, it wasn't the sort of thing I would typically spend money or go someplace to a concert.

Even when we were down in North Carolina, I think the Rolling Stones were playing in Charlotte and people were going and I'd knew they'd be smoking marijuana and stuff. I just wasn't comfortable with it, so I never did that. So, I didn't see the Rolling Stones that night. My wife and I still are not big concert goers. Now, even though we can afford it, it seems like a ridiculous amount of money. We now live very near the [PNC Bank] Arts Center here, so maybe at some point, we will go to some things, but we're getting to the age where we complain

stuff is too loud and I can't understand the words. So, I'm not sure how many more concerts we'll go to. I like Billy Joel, but three or four hundred dollars at Madison Square Garden, I can't justify it in my own mind somehow. There are some things I'll spend money for, but, right now, that's not one of them.

KR: Your sophomore year was the spring of 1968, when President Johnson decided not to run for reelection. Martin Luther King was assassinated. Robert Kennedy was assassinated. What do you remember about 1968? [Editor's Note: Lyndon Johnson assumed the presidency in 1963, after John F. Kennedy was assassinated, and then won the election in 1964. On March 31, 1968, Johnson announced that he would not run seek reelection due to his unpopularity for escalating the Vietnam War. Martin Luther King Jr. was assassinated on April 4, 1968 in Memphis, Tennessee. Robert F. Kennedy was assassinated in Los Angeles, California on June 5, 1968, after winning the Democratic primary in California.]

JR: Again, I was spending my time selling shoes and getting off probation and [trying to] do better in school. I can't even think what classes that kind of stuff came up. It's just too far back for me. I think I was home in Hoboken when Kennedy, I'm getting confused a little, when Robert Kennedy was shot, but I know I was there when Oswald was shot. I don't know what month Kennedy was shot, Robert Kennedy.

KR: June.

JR: June. I would've been home, yes. I didn't go into this last time, but I grew up in a one-bedroom apartment with my parents and my brother. So, my brother and I slept in one room, and my parents slept on a pull-out couch. Then, as my brother left and I was home, I would get the pull-out couch and my parents got the bedroom. The four of us had one bathroom. For years, we were married, and then after our kids moved out, what do we end up with? Four bathrooms and two of us. It's like, "This isn't the way I grew up." It was a very different experience. I remember lying on the pullout couch, I think, when Oswald was shot, and I don't know if I did with Kennedy. It might've been in the same place, but, like I said, those months in June, it was all about working because I was already eighteen or something. I was sort of working full time in the summer. That may have been the summer I was working for my uncle at the concrete yard, or I may have been working in different shoe stores. I was getting up and getting dressed and going out to work, so that stuff was happening someplace else and happening to other people.

I'm sure it had an effect on me at the time, but I'm trying to recall it today as having any big impact. We used to watch Walter Cronkite all the time, so I can remember watching the news, seeing the news. I don't remember Walter Cronkite's broadcast basically saying this war is unwinnable or whatever or whether I watched Johnson's speech saying he wasn't going to run again. My son, who now works in Washington, has flown with Obama on Air Force One. My brother-in-law was a helicopter pilot for Bush and Reagan. My son has interviewed Donald Trump by phone. My big moment was seeing Mayor Grogan on the street corner. It's just an entirely different world for my kids and who they interact with and who they see and what they do than a kid growing up in Hoboken. [Editor's Note: Renowned broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite, who anchored the *CBS Evening News* from 1962 to 1981, offered his opinion on

February 27, 1968 that the U.S. should negotiate a peace deal to end the Vietnam War. Jeff Rubin's son Richard Rubin is the U.S. tax policy reporter for *The Wall Street Journal* in Washington. John J. Grogan was the Mayor of Hoboken, New Jersey from 1953 to 1965.]

Every time I think about it, it's just sort of mindboggling. It's kind of the American dream. It's sad, you go back and forth between is it white privilege or is it people who work really hard or people who got lucky or people who had two parents? Who knows what? I don't have the worries a lot of people seem to have about their [children]. Our kids are doing perfectly fine, and I don't have worries about their kids. People seem worried about that stuff. Worrying about it, by the way, isn't going to change it. I've got enough stupid things that I worry about that I'm not going to worry about what's going to happen to my grandkids. I don't worry about that, seeing what's happened to my kids themselves. I could've easily just ended up back in Hoboken, had a very nice life, living in a nice town and a nice family, very different than what I ended up with.

I've met, in the Federal Reserve meeting room, with Greenspan and Yellen and Powell. I mean, it's like, "Huh? How did this stuff happen? How am I here?" I did have my one quote in an article in *The New York Times*, amazing. My kids probably, my older one especially, the younger one, they all have excellent memories and we'll see what they remember about growing up and some of the big historical events. Again, maybe it's too far removed or just didn't have as much of an impact on me that I can't give you chapter and verse about how they affected me. Like I said, Jonathan Kozol's *Death at an Early Age* affected me more personally than some of these events. It was just stunning to read. [Editor's Note: Alan Greenspan is an economist who chaired the Federal Reserve from 1987 to 2006. Janet Yellen served as the chair of the Federal Reserve from 2014 to 2018. Jerome Powell has served as chair of the Federal Reserve since 2018.]

KR: In broad strokes, compare and contrast Rutgers in 1966 to Rutgers in 1970.

JR: I mean, sort of the radicalization of youth. We all came in with suits and ties and short hair. I'm not sure whatever happened to people in those four years. I'm sure it was different than, let's say, from '62 to '66. For me, I would say my experience was probably more like Rutgers '62-'66 than many of my classmates, who went through more radical politics and drug use. In that respect, I'm different. I don't know how different. I'd be curious to know how many of my classmates say they identify more with the Rutgers of '60 and '62 or '63 than the class that came in at '66. Yes, Rutgers was still--especially given what I know changed institutionally later, coed, bringing the campuses together--it was still the same old Rutgers in that respect. I think, obviously, they made changes to accommodate some student demands and freedoms and so on. I was off campus, like I said, for two years, so I was going **to** Rutgers, but I'm not sure I was **at** Rutgers. I haven't ever said it that way, but maybe that's, in some respects, what happened to me, what was happening with me personally, as opposed to what was happening in the outside world. I vaguely remember, I have pictures somewhere of graduation and I think Walter Cronkite was the speaker, but that's not in the yearbook. I haven't looked it up, but I don't remember a thing he said, of course. That was at the "Old" Football Stadium that we all marched into. Then, I worked in the summer, and I went off to Duke in the fall.

KR: You have talked about this a little bit when you have been telling other stories, but take me through the spring of 1970 and what was going on, on campus, and then what was happening with you.

JR: Sure. I had gotten into a serious relationship with someone from Douglass, so we were spending a lot of time together. That's my recollection. [laughter] I'd have to ask her if that's her recollection. So, that was a lot of time. I remember my brother taking me to Menlo Park Mall to the Archie Jacobson store to buy a suit for interviews, which was probably not the best-fitted suit and probably not the best haircut in the world. I remember not knowing what to do about interviews. I know later on, we talked to students much more about how you go about doing an interview, what to say, and what to prepare for, but I had no clue. I don't know how many interviews I had, but I certainly didn't get any job offers out of that. As I said, somewhere in there, I got mono and I'm not sure if I had mono bad enough to be in the infirmary, but they kept me in the infirmary.

Interestingly, my son, who went to Duke years later, ended up with mono. That was bad also, and my wife had to go down and take care of him. They were able to stay--she had a friend down in Durham who was at the nursing school. So, we kind of cycled back. We were both at Duke. He had mono at Duke, and I had it at Rutgers.

Then, not that long after I got out [of the infirmary], I think Kent State happened, and Rutgers closed down. I don't know, it looks like the dates at Rutgers, the semester went further into May than it does now. Kent State was like the first week of May, so I don't know how many weeks of classes, whether it was one or two and then no exams. You had to go in and kind of meet with a professor and sort of decide on a grade, I guess. I find it kind of interesting because my eleven-year-old grandson, who goes to this special school in D.C., they told him, "Now that you're not coming into class anymore, the rule is, whatever you do between now until the end of the year, your grade can't go down." They're working on grades much the same way people were working on grades. Whatever grade we got, we talked to our instructors, based on the work we had done, and got a grade. I'm not sure it reflected how much I ended up learning that senior semester. Those were sort of the three big things, having a relationship going, getting in the infirmary, and then classes being cancelled. [Editor's Note: Following President Richard Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia, a nationwide student strike commenced in the beginning of May 1970. The strike began at Rutgers on Friday, May 1. On Monday, May 4, two thousand protesters gathered on the Old Queens Campus, and Rutgers President Mason Gross addressed the crowd, calling the protesters his guests. That day, two hundred students occupied the second and third floors of Old Queens, including Gross' office, resulting in a two-day sit-in of Old Queens. On May 4 in Ohio, National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters and bystanders at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine. The Rutgers College faculty voted on Tuesday, May 5 to make classes and final exams optional and instituted pass/fail grades for the spring semester 1970. On May 5, massive demonstrations continued at Rutgers, and protests and counter-protests continued for several weeks at Rutgers and on campuses across the nation. On May 14 and 15, 1970, students at Jackson State College protesting against racial harassment were fired upon by state and city police, resulting in two deaths and a dozen injuries. (From Paul Clemens' *Rutgers Since 1945*; Kent State University Libraries, Campus Strike Papers: New Jersey: Rutgers University, 1970)]

I don't even remember, at the end of the day, moving out of the apartment. I was living with Ken Landoline, who was also in the Class of '70. I have to send him a note and encourage him to do this. He did get a job. He was getting married soon, I think soon after college, which a lot of people were doing. Then, I was off to graduate school. The person I was seeing at the time, it was weird because she wanted to go to graduate school and I was looking for a job. She ended up getting a job and I went to graduate school. It didn't work out quite the way we all planned just six months earlier, I guess, so stuff happens. It's one of the things you tell the students all the time. Don't worry about trying to plan this stuff out. The opportunities are going to come. Keep your connections open. You never know where the next job is going to come from. You can't figure this stuff out, and that's what happened to me after Duke and through my career at Rutgers. Stuff happened that I didn't necessarily plan. Most of the time, it was good.

I wish I had taken notes and taken pictures. I wish I was a photographer. The pictures, no offense to the people in the yearbook, it's not very good photography. I don't know if it's the quality of the film back in those days, but the yearbooks these days look so much better. I ended up taking a lot of pictures of graduate students and different awards things in economics because I got into taking pictures and getting nice cameras, never over-the-top kind of stuff. But we didn't have the money to do those hobbies. I just wasn't recording that history. I didn't think of it as a history I wanted to recall. I'm not sure what kind of pictures we have floating around. I don't have albums. [laughter] I do have a set of pictures of me between Little League and grammar school that I put in a frame at one point, seven or eight pictures that I found, with my parents and my brother and then just me with a little string tie with my name and script on it. Yes, 1970 was more about me personally getting into a relationship and then getting into economics more and thinking about graduate school than it was everything that was swirling around, which, I guess, maybe at the end of the day is good. Maybe I had a little bit of a focus on something and I didn't get caught up in all that stuff because I'm not sure where that would've gone. [Editor's Note: Jeff Rubin's telephone rings.] Can you hang on just one second?

KR: Sure.

JR: Nobody ever calls on this phone. [Editor's Note: Jeff Rubin answers the telephone and has a short discussion.] Sorry, that's the house phone that nobody ever uses. A couple people have it, and for some reason, they call us on it. Anyway, I had my focus on that stuff, and the other stuff, I'm sure we had talked about it and I'm sure we had discussions, but it wasn't part of my life in a big way, at least it doesn't seem like it was now.

KR: You had a girlfriend who went to Douglass College. What were your interactions with Douglass students like?

JR: That was it pretty much. She was in Katzenbach [Hall], I think, and there were various rules about people visiting and so on. I remember spending time in the parking lot there. That was interesting. I don't think I really want to get too much into it, but she had an interesting family life. It exposed me to some things, one, living in the suburbs in a single-family home, which was different than growing up in a one-bedroom apartment in Hoboken. I think my life was an eye-opener for her, and her life was a little bit of an eye-opener for me. So, that was sort of

interesting. I think I went to the opera, maybe it was a ballet with her. That was not something I would typically be doing--or probably even Broadway plays, I think we went to some. So, that became my typical life when I lived in the suburbs after I came back, but it wasn't my life growing up. I was going to ball games and the Fabian Theater in Hoboken to see Clarabell and watch *Howdy Doody* or something, but that stuff was not on my radar screen at all.

That's the sort of thing that happens to people in college; you meet people from different backgrounds, you get exposed to different kinds of lifestyles and how people live. As I said, she had some interesting family things going on that opened my eyes to people's households. My younger son had not quite an experience with a female friend, but he had friends from summer camp that he went to visit in Long Island. He came home and he was stunned, he said, "These people, the parents yell at each other during the day." He just had no clue that's what happened in households because it didn't happen in our household, and it was, in some ways, a great experience for him to see how somebody else lives. When kids see that, what happens in somebody [else's life], we're all interested, which is why all these reality shows about people's lives, people find so interesting. You want to see what happens inside other people's houses. How do they live? How do they interact? How do they behave? We want that hidden-camera thing. So, it was a bit of an eye-opener for me. Certainly, I remember it in my son as well, when he saw that.

Again, like I said, I took classes at Douglass. There were three Douglass girls who lived in the apartment below us on Remsen [Avenue]. It was, especially for me--maybe not so much for others, maybe if you were in a fraternity--but it was all awkward because you didn't have the classroom interactions with females, for the most part. The math majors, well, it was Rutgers College and I don't know how many math majors were from Douglass that were in our classes. I don't remember anybody. I'm sure there were, but all that stuff was very awkward for me. It took me a long time to be comfortable talking to people, to females, but people in general. I still have trouble with that.

KR: Before we started recording, we were talking about similarities between students who graduated in 1970 and students graduating in 2020. Can you say, on the record, what strikes you about that?

JR: Sure, I'm not sure I can recall what we said off the record. Certainly, more career oriented. Certainly, better prepared academically. Certainly, at the end of the day, as my mother would say, they teach you a lot at college but no common sense stuff. So, they may still not have much common sense, but the students I was interacting with, their understanding of the world and what goes on [was greater than mine at that age]. I think some of it's the Internet. On the other hand, it would always boggle my mind that students, they could use Google, but they didn't know how to use the results. It was striking that you could say, "Just Google it." I had this honors class, I think, my last semester at Rutgers, and often something would come up. Of course, they were all there in this little honors seminar with their laptops, and I would say, "Google it." But they would look at the results and they couldn't distill what was really a good result, what was the place to go follow the link and get the right information, and it struck me then and is still true probably that that's a skill. It's like looking through books or articles and understanding which ones are going to be helpful and which ones aren't.

It just reminds me of something, going back to my time, I guess, I was still an undergraduate, at Alexander Library. I tried to improve my performance, spending a lot of time in the basement of Alexander Library, where they had long, long rows of tables and people would just sit at those tables. There'd be interaction. There'd be noise, but you could study, as opposed to in your dorm. I don't know if this is after I came back at Rutgers, but I would often wander. This was my own version of the Internet, I guess. Instead of an Internet, I would wander around the government stacks at Rutgers and just pull stuff randomly out and find the most interesting things, population stuff, census stuff, Social Security, healthcare stuff anything. It was fascinating. I think it was more when I got back. There was a really good government librarian. I think he was an Asian guy. He was very helpful. He knew where everything was. As I got into doing some consulting and I needed data before the Internet, I could ask him and he would find it. It's not getting knowledge; it's being able to use knowledge. It's still something students oftentimes don't have. It's a skill, and, again, one of the things why they're in college. They go to a seminar. You don't necessarily teach it, but they learn it by observing. I might pull up on the screen a Google search and say, "Well, you don't want this one." Part of the problem is because I already knew a lot of this stuff. I knew what was important, but somehow I learned to figure out what was important and they needed to do that too.

They come better prepared. They come expecting to work hard. There's still the first-generation college kids who need [to build] their confidence and their ego, that they're capable, that they can do it. The frustrating part always for teachers, I think, is that, again, a lot of them just aren't ready to learn. They don't have, the classic word, they don't have the curiosity. They're not interested.

I wish I kept the course reviews to get the quote exactly right, but I always tell this story. They started doing the course reviews at Rutgers, and you could read the comments. One of the things I would do in my class in intro economics, there was always a story in *The New York Times* that was a good example of supply and demand working, sometimes totally off-the-wall stuff that as a non-economist, you wouldn't see any economics there at all. I would post one, two articles a day, all the time. Maybe I'd make some comments; I'd explain what it's about. You never know which article somebody's going to find interesting based on maybe their family has a bagel store or a bakery or is a car repair guy or something, and then all of a sudden, there's an article that connects with them. Anyway, the student, one of the comments is, "Professor Rubin posts a lot of articles online. We know he's interested. We're not." Crushing, crushing stuff. I come back to say, that's exactly my job. My job was to make them interested, and if they didn't get it as freshmen or in that class, they'll get it in the next class or if they don't get it there, they'll get it. But you hope, by the end of the day, by the time they leave, they've gone from wanting a degree to wanting an education, and that was my guiding principle. It was like you had to keep at it.

The same thing was true for economists; people would complain, "Oh, they don't understand this." It's like, "Of course, they don't understand it. They've probably seen it one year. You've seen it for thirty years, and it's all you do. Of course, they're not going to understand it and have the same intuition that you have." It takes years of thinking about these things to see problems in a certain way, and economists just see problems in a different way than the rest of the world. Some of the debate about the economy versus deaths in COVID-19 is a great example, as

economists would see the problem very differently than [New York] Governor [Andrew] Cuomo, who says, "Any death we can avoid is worth avoiding," which is kind of stupid. I would ask him, "How far apart are the streetlights on the New York Thruway and why aren't they closer together? Or why don't you have the speed limit on the Thruway at forty miles an hour, if you know it would reduce deaths by fifty a year or thirty a year?" We do it because we're willing to make tradeoffs. People don't want to go forty miles an hour on the Thruway and you can try to enforce it, but at the end of the day, if you could, you'd have far fewer deaths, but we accept that tradeoff. I'm not saying what we should or shouldn't do here, but the statements "if we save one life no matter what we do" are just illogical. At least, again, to an economist, they're illogical. The choices we make all the time show that, and it just drives economists crazy that people can't see it the same way. There's other ways to see these problems, but at the end of the day, there's a limit to how much you can spend to prevent any particular death. Anyway, off track, so, what else is different between students?

KR: One of the similarities between 1970 and 2020 are that classes were ended in person.

JR: Okay.

KR: Yes, I was wondering if you could talk about that comparison.

JR: Sure. 2020, obviously, I'm not at Rutgers now. I was thinking more about my time at Rutgers. Just like that article in *The Wall Street Journal*, it could have been written about Rutgers as well, although we didn't have graduation cancelled. Sure, there were parallels, other than classes cancelled. We obviously were still on campus. We were still in our dorms. We didn't get sent home and then have to come back somehow and pick up our stuff. We did the usual moving out of campus stuff. We had the graduation experience. We didn't have online learning, obviously, so classes, as far as I can recall, classes just ended. It wasn't like you had to go back and do a report on the last chapter in the book that you were going to cover the next week in the semester. I don't remember, like I said, how many weeks were left. I think it ended a little bit earlier than we ended, closer to exams, in 1970.

I did look online. The School of Arts and Sciences did a wonderful job in an online graduation tribute, the speech, but they had a four-minute video of what happened in your four years and how transformative it was and all of that. In some ways, that's almost better than the real graduation, where you get terrible weather and it's drizzly or it's cold and nobody can park and it's just a mess. It was, in some ways, very nice. I mean, I was on campus; I used to come to campus all the time, especially when they did graduations on College Avenue, to be there. I'd get there early, and I'd get a parking spot. Then, I'd leave during graduation, because I typically didn't go, but I'd watch them come through Old Queens and then march down past us in New Jersey Hall. Sometimes, we got to meet the parents of kids. Especially honors students that I did a senior thesis with, I would always try to make a point to meet their parents. I was hoping to meet some parents this year of kids from Fed Challenge that I'm still advising, but I obviously didn't get the opportunity. We usually go out for dinner with the seniors. We did an online chat with two of them and [I] didn't get to chat with the third one. So, we missed that a little bit. Yes, it's always interesting to talk to the parents, meet the parents, for us on the faculty, I thought. [Editor's Note: Jeff Rubin served as the Faculty Advisor for the Rutgers-New Brunswick College

Fed Challenge Team, which became the National Champion in 2016 and National Runner-Up in 2018.]

I remember meeting mostly my older son's [professors] because of the way it was set up. The older one, he was political science at Duke, and they had a separate tent and they had a little ceremony there. That's one of the things I liked. Before I left, Rutgers changed it, but we had a little separate economics convocation, which was wonderful, I thought, again, spend time hanging around, meeting parents before and after that and a much more personal experience than the big college experience for graduation. But I think they subsequently changed that again. I think there's still something for economics, or there was--obviously, not this year. They'll certainly remember the virus. Ours is Kent State and protests and riots, and theirs is a medical issue. Hopefully, all of them are okay.

I know my niece's husband, who works in student affairs in the Dean of Students office, got a fairly bad case of COVID-19 from meeting with a lot of students at the end, and luckily, nobody else in the family got it. He recovered, but he was not well for a couple weeks. It was clearly around on campus, obviously the right decision to cancel classes and get people out of there.

It's actually very interesting, after teaching the large classes for many years and my wife complaining that I was always getting sick, I finally put two and two together and realized most of the time I was getting sick was in May and December, and it was from handling all the blue books and being in the big room with students who were not getting enough sleep, who were sick, coughing and whatever. So, I started being much more careful, wearing gloves, taking hand sanitizer, bringing tissues when I was handling blue books and exams. Sure enough, I was much less likely to get sick in December and May, at the end of each semester. So, I was preparing for this COVID [pandemic] long before I knew it, but it was the same thing, the germs were there. They were on the exams. I would be grading the exams, touching my face, and sure enough I would get sick.

KR: What do you remember about Mason Gross?

JR: Actually, before we got there, Mason Gross made his name by standing up for Eugene Genovese. I read in some of the subsequent stuff that he kind of got misquoted or maybe got quoted right, but then it got translated differently, that he was looking forward to the Vietcong victory. He was anticipating it. It was kind of different than what he ended up saying. [Editor's Note: Eugene Genovese (1930-2012), a scholar of slavery and the American South, served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1963 to 1967. On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Scott Hall dedicated to discussing U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam, Genovese declared, "Those of you who know me know that I am a Marxist and a Socialist. Therefore, unlike most of my distinguished colleagues here this morning, I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Genovese is remembered for his "welcome" of Viet Cong victory, but he went on to criticize U.S. foreign policy by saying, "Our policy has been to support corrupt regimes because these regimes would allow their countries to be exploited and would stop the spread of socialism ... the threat from Cuba is its example and its ideology. It suggests that other countries too can be masters in their own house." Amidst the firestorm of controversy that ensued, Rutgers President Mason Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted public pressure

to dismiss Genovese and staunchly defended the principle of academic freedom. Genovese later resigned and moved to Canada, where he taught at Sir George Williams University. Gross (1911-1977) served as the president of Rutgers from 1959 to 1971.]

Of course, we all [were deciding], at that point, do you want to go to Rutgers? Rutgers had all this wild protest going on. It was anti-war and trying to understand the president's view of freedom of speech and what faculty could say and do and standing up for faculty. I kind of remember that. Again, I don't remember conversations, but I remember that and [Mason Gross was] a well-dressed guy, maybe because I was eighteen, seventeen years old, a big dynamic personality kind of guy, filled the room. I can't say I remember seeing him.

I have better recollections of walking by that plaque in front of Milledoler [Hall], I guess Milledoler, and seeing his face all the time on campus than I can say individually that I have specific recollections of him personally. [Editor's Note: This refers to the Mason Gross Memorial in front of Milledoler Hall on Voorhees Mall.] I don't think I interacted with him in any specific way. But he was more a president of a college instead of, as it became later, an administrator of a school. The presidents afterwards transitioned, I guess, from being that sort of social leader and having a role to play in the state to being administrators at the University. It's too bad. I don't know who the new person is coming in, what sort of stature he's going to have, and how willing he's going to be to be the public face of Rutgers. I don't think any of the presidents that followed Mason Gross filled [those] particular shoes. [Editor's Note: Jonathan Holloway started his term as the 21st president of Rutgers University on July 1, 2020.]

Bloustein maybe was active. I didn't see it. I guess my perception is Mason Gross was a bigger figure in New Jersey than the others were. That's partly because Rutgers was a small liberal arts school with a different focus. Then, as it changed to a big state university, it became a different place, and I think that's one of the issues between alums pre-1970 and post-1970. It just became a different place. It wasn't the place we went to. The all-male, very limited, small classes, all senior faculty teaching, mostly faculty doing a lot of teaching, getting rewarded for teaching to the shift towards a research university and so on, that makes it a very different place. I'm sure that's hard for a lot of pre-1970 alums to kind of wrap their head around. [Editor's Note: Edward Bloustein served as the president of Rutgers University from 1971 until his death in 1989.]

KR: What other memories of Rutgers would you like to share?

JR: Other things at Rutgers, I always thought it was funny, after the fact that I still think of the bookstore as that little shack next to Records Hall. It's kind of amazing when Rutgers got a real bookstore, first downtown and then on College Avenue. Let's see, I'm looking over my notes here for a second. I've covered a fair amount. This is from my time at Rutgers more than afterwards, which you want to talk about. I could say one totally different, related memory. I remember when Rutgers, telling you more about my interest, when Rutgers got to the [NIT]--I should look it up--but I think it was the March of probably '67, '68, when Rutgers made it to the NIT in New York for the tournament. Again, this is the way I tell the story and I've never looked it up to be a hundred percent sure, but they got to the semifinal game and they were winning at halftime. I remember going to line up, to sleep outside the College Avenue Gym to get tickets for the finals. Walt Frazier, who was the star at Southern Illinois, came on like crazy in the

second half. We were all listening on the radio, and then we all went home. Again, my recollection is there were six inches of snow that night. So, I'm not sure what would've happened to us sitting in front of the College Avenue Gym, waiting to get tickets, if in fact there was the snowfall. I guess somebody could look it up to see what the weather was. [Editor's Note: On March 16, 1967, the Rutgers men's basketball team, led by Bobby Lloyd and Jim Valvano, lost to Southern Illinois 79-70 in the semifinals of the National Invitation Tournament (NIT). Walt Frazier went on to lead Southern Illinois to win the championship over Marquette. It snowed two inches that day.]

I went on to be actually a fairly big Walt Frazier fan because those years the Knicks were actually fun to watch, the Knicks with Bill Bradley and Willis Reed. I can remember playing as a kid a game called Bas-Ket, which--I still have in the basement--I introduced to my grandkids with old-timer Knicks. My father had a friend, I don't know how many times we went, but he had a friend who could get, in those days, you could get front row seats under the basket for it must have been reasonable prices because none of these people were wealthy. The Knicks used to play a doubleheader. I can remember being under the basket and the loose ball coming to me and Wilt Chamberlain, who was seven-foot-one, saying, "Give me the ball, kid," or something like that. [Editor's Note: A first- round draft pick by the New York Knicks, Walt Frazier played for the Knicks from 1967 to 1977, along with Bill Bradley (1967 to 1977) and Willis Reed (1964 to 1974). The Knicks won the NBA Championship in 1970 and 1973. Wilt Chamberlain was a two-time NBA Champion and Hall of Famer center whose career spanned 1958 to 1973. Bas-Ket is a game in which players use levers to shoot a ping-pong-size ball into a basket, just like basketball.]

I remember being in the very old Madison Square Garden, where they allowed smoking, and so we were sitting in the upper deck and it was a ring of smoke. It was brutal. I can remember the Knicks losing a game on two foul shots by Maurice Stokes, who subsequently got some neurological disease, it was terrible, and died very young. Oscar Robertson was his teammate, and Jack Twyman--this stuff is coming back to me--took care of Maurice Stokes. I don't know how long he lived with this really terrible neurological condition. That's going way pre-Rutgers. [Editor's Note: Maurice Stokes was an NBA player who suffered brain damage and paralysis after hitting his head on the court in 1958. His teammate Jack Twyman cared for him until his death in 1970.]

The Rutgers story of the NIT and the screaming loud crowds at the College Avenue Gym and the paint chips falling from the roof that people talk about, those were good memories of Rutgers. That's what I was doing with my time was, I'm sure, going to basketball games in '69 and '70, while all the other turmoil was going on.

I have the ticket stub and the program somewhere and the cancelled stamped envelope from the hundredth anniversary football game in 1969, I guess, against Princeton. I was there for that. I was reading some of the yearbooks, I don't remember the game, but I have a few bits of memorabilia that I have sitting around. There was a pin too, I guess. I don't know if we got that as freshman or seniors, where you could slide a little piece of paper in with your name, "Hello, my name is Jeff," or something, "Class of '70," I guess. I had that somewhere, I don't know where that is. [Editor's Note: The first-ever college football game was played on November 6,

1869 between Rutgers and Princeton. On September 27, 1969, the two teams faced off in the centennial game, and Rutgers won 29-0.]

I'm sure there are other things that would come up. I remember being in Winants Hall, where the Economics Department was. Because it was so decayed on the third and fourth floor, there were no people allowed up there. So, if you wanted to see somebody on the second floor, you had to go back downstairs and go in the other entrance because you couldn't get there from there. They subsequently moved us out of Winants Hall, and then they did a big renovation, put alumni affairs and other stuff in there. Then, they've done another renovation, and I think the president subsequently moved in there. When I was meeting faculty as a student, I was going to Winants Hall, and then years later, when I came back, I had an office in Winants Hall, before they moved us out to New Jersey Hall. [Editor's Note: Built in 1890, Winants Hall is a historic building on the Old Queens Campus within the College Avenue Campus. Today, it is an administrative building that houses the president's office.]

They wanted to move us in the Economics Department to Livingston, which would've been great for me because I lived in Piscataway, but we had several faculty who came in on the train and the last thing they wanted to do was the train and the bus and the whole thing. The department was able to, I guess, work out a deal to stay on College Avenue. For years, later on, a lot of us taught on Livingston. It was great because it was the same students on Livingston Campus; after a while, it was the same School of Arts and Sciences. In fact, it was easy to park and you could get out and get home without getting stuck on College Avenue, where if you tried to leave when classes were changing, it was chaos. I taught on Douglass and I could get right on Route 18 and go home at the end of the day. When I was giving the schedules, I'd give myself the later periods on Douglass. I'd go over in the middle of the day. I'd teach my classes and then just zip on Route 18 and go home. I don't know if I have anything else, other than minor stuff, but if anything else important comes up, I'll let you know. I think we've gone through all the important stuff for Rutgers and me for those four years.

KR: I would like to ask you about your graduate school years and then your Rutgers career years ...

JR: Sure.

KR: … In addition to talking about your family. We have been going for an hour and twenty minutes today. Do you want to meet again tomorrow and we can talk about graduate school, career and family?

JR: Everybody's still sleeping here.

KR: Okay.

JR: Let's keep going.

KR: Let's keep going, sure.

JR: When we come back to Rutgers, I don't know how much we'll get into my time at Rutgers versus the Class of '69-'70 stuff, but I'm happy to talk about it, something like forty years. We can talk about graduate school and maybe get me back to Rutgers and then talk about that a little bit and see where it goes.

KR: That sounds great. When you were at graduate school, what became your area of focus? Who did you study with when you were at Duke?

JR: Sure. I ended up doing a dissertation with David Davies, who was a public finance guy. They allowed us to take classes over in Chapel Hill at UNC [University of North Carolina], so I got interested in public policy stuff. One of the things I was interested in was urban economics. There was a guy over there, Charlie Richter. A friend of mine, my first roommate at Duke, he and I drove over and took a year's worth of urban economics with Richter. I think one semester was urban and one semester was regional economics. Then, I took a course over there in urban and regional planning and then one in urban education, which all of this was probably a mistake. I should've taken more traditional econ classes. I didn't get nearly as good an econ background as I should have. I got turned off; I partly got turned off by the math, partly realized I wasn't good enough to do it or I wasn't going to work hard enough to learn the math. I got way more interested in policy, which is what I was doing for most of my time thereafter. I did do public finance, and I got interested in the redistributive effects of higher education. Somebody had done a study in Wisconsin on that, and I tried to replicate that in my dissertation in New Jersey. I ended up getting all this tax data and income data on people going to Rutgers to try to see how state subsidies from New Jersey ended up [funding Rutgers] compared to what people, through their taxes, were paying for Rutgers.

I should go back actually. One of the things that helped me get through Rutgers is I had one of those five-hundred-dollar state scholarships. I'm not quite sure how I qualified for that, if that was academics and need or whatever, but I think that paid for tuition each year.

Anyway, so, I worked with Dave Davies. We had an old-timer statistics professor, and that was also unfortunate. It wasn't a very good education. We did a year of micro, a year of macro. We weren't required to take econometrics, but I tried to sit in in a class and I can remember I just did not get it at the time. It was a big mistake for me. I should've taken it for credit and worked much harder, but I didn't. I was way more interested in applied microeconomics. I did take Roy Weintraub, who had been at Rutgers. I took him for a class at Duke in macroeconomics, which turned out to be not really his field.

It's interesting, again, let me go back, my senior year at Rutgers, I think I maybe took a course in mathematical economics. I don't know if it was with Weintraub or not. There was work in what was called general equilibrium theory and that one paper that I described, where I didn't get such good comments, and a previous one that I did, he said I did okay in. I had a paper on something called Kakutani fixed-point theorem for general equilibrium analysis and I'm not sure I ever understood what this was, but I wrote these papers on it. So, that was sort of my experience pre-graduate school at Rutgers for saying, "I like doing this stuff. I need to learn it better and understand it better, but I really like this stuff." That's, again, getting an education rather than getting a degree kind of thing. Again, you do it, and it turns out not to be where your strengths

are. [Editor's Note: Kakutani fixed-point theorem is a mathematical theorem developed by Shizuo Kakutani in 1941.]

The policy stuff, the taxation stuff, the higher education issues, the urban issues were some of the [topics that interested me]. I can remember thinking about doing a dissertation on the urban economics of guerrilla warfare. I'm not sure how I would've done it. It would've been unique if I ever could've finished it or done it. I never got very far. At the time, there was a lot of this, in the U.S., there was some of it, it was sort of guerrilla warfare, where people were sniping at people, and certainly in other countries.

I took a course in income distribution theory, where the guy tore me [apart]. I had blue books that he was not gentle with his criticism, which made the fact that I was one of the ten that passed the prelims all that more amazing for me. One of my favorite stories of taking the prelims is one of the questions, I was writing this long answer and I realized eighty percent of the way through, "This is not the right answer." I started writing something like, "Well, that might be one way to do this problem, but here's another way," and I wrote out [the other way]. That may have been the thing that saved me.

I'm not sure how I got through the macro stuff because still, to this day, macro seems very ad hoc, but I knew enough to get through. At that time, what people would do, there'd be a bulletin board. Everybody got a number when you took your blue book, you got a number whatever, and they posted the results, number one pass, number two pass, micro fail, macro, and I looked at my number, I passed micro and macro. It's like, "Holy crap."

I think we had oral field exams, which, again, a story I tell. I don't know if it was oral field exams or my dissertation, but they asked a question. I went up to the blackboard to answer, and my knees started knocking. It was the second time in my life. When some bully in Hoboken was threatening to beat me up [was] the first time. The second time was at the blackboard, and it was like, "Oh, this is not good." I thought I knew what I was doing. I don't know if it was that time. They were trying to lead me. They gave me all these hints and I just never got what they were. It was amazing they passed me anyway. I guess I gave some other answers that were okay. But you just freeze in some of those moments. Oral exams, it's difficult.

That's why, again, later on, when I did Fed Challenge, I was so impressed with the students and their ability to answer questions in a really, really tough environment, just amazing capabilities, not just the Rutgers students, but students from other--not every student from other schools--but some students from other schools were really, really talented, nothing I could have done as an undergraduate.

I got through a breakup in a relationship that started at Rutgers in the years I was at Duke. Then, in the fall of '72, I was coming home for a cousin's wedding, and I think it was Halloween weekend, the way that my wife tells the story. I'm sure it's right. My sister-in-law was teaching in Piscataway, and there was this nice Jewish girl. She asked her, "Are you Jewish?" "Yes." "Do you have a boyfriend?" "No." "Do you want to meet my brother-in-law?" She said, "Fine." So, we met at my brother's house, and I can still remember that, walking into the room, it was like, "Oh, my God," just like at Duke, I'm in over my head. [laughter] Even though she tells the

story that I asked her after that to go to my cousin's wedding that weekend, which she thought was silly; she always embarrasses me by telling that, we stayed in touch. By the spring, we were engaged, and by August, we were married. Now, we're coming up on forty-seven years.

This was her second year in Piscataway. She had a teaching job. I had no money, no job. I think I ended up making five hundred dollars for teaching a course in managerial economics up at Fairleigh Dickinson in East Rutherford one night a week. She would drive up there with me and sit in the back and grade papers, and the students in the class had no clue why she wasn't taking notes or anything until they sort of figured it out later on. That was my teaching experience. Ultimately, by 1973, I got a job, a research job, at Rutgers and I was making a few bucks.

I think I came home the first summer at Duke, and then the second one, I must have stayed down there. After the first year, my roommate--he was from Canada--he got married. His wife came down. She was teaching in North Carolina, which was a shocker to her. I'm sure she tells [that] the kids didn't come to the school at the beginning of the semester because they were out picking tobacco in the fields, that sort of thing. Then, we moved off campus. I was with a couple of math majors and another guy from econ. I don't know if it was three or four of us each year. I stay in touch with one of the math guys, who ended up as an actuary at Mutual of Omaha, of all places, for his whole career.

We had a lot of fun. ACC [Atlantic Coast Conference] basketball was great. The graduate center, we'd watch basketball as a group there all the time. You met all kinds of different people from different fields. There was somebody who ended up being, I'm trying to think, in some biology-related field, she ended up in South Dakota, marrying a guy who was in economics, who ended up, he never finished--he was brilliant, he was stunningly brilliant--but he could never finish. I think his parents were MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] professors maybe. He ended up getting a computer science degree, and he and she are teaching at University of South Dakota in Vermillion. We stay in touch with them in the holidays. We were out for one of their kid's weddings, and I think they came to my wedding. So, that was a good year.

The graduate center was a lot of fun. There were math people. A lot of the math people and econ people ended up hanging out together. As I said, that semester, working with fellow grad students on the problems was just the most fun you could imagine. It was just really exciting to talk about the problems. We had a really interesting micro professor who had just gotten his degree at Duke. I got a little stunned, I guess the first weekend there maybe or something, they had a party and these guys on the faculty, at least one guy was driving his motorcycle around. It's like, "These aren't my kind of people." It's like, "What is this?" But it turned out to be good.

The people in the classes ahead of us and behind us were very interesting, had very good careers. Duke economics was trying to recover. It had lost some key faculty and was trying to rebuild its faculty, and I think it subsequently got much better, much tougher to get into, as they put more money into the econ department. They brought some people in while I was there, and even after, they brought other people in and improved the quality of their program dramatically.

It was the connection to Roy Weintraub, who put a good word for me in with somebody at Rutgers, that got me an interview for a job, and Monroe Berkowitz was the faculty member who was doing this research on disability, who didn't hire me the first time he interviewed. Again, I was probably not the right guy, but then I guess he couldn't find anybody. [laughter] A month or two later, he called me up and offered me the job, and it was the beginning of a fairly long academic relationship working with him. He worked with many graduate students in economics and had longer relationships with others, but he and I wrote a number of things together.

He was a guy who was a real stickler, especially in learning how to edit and write documents. I can remember lots of things about it, but one of the things was I gave him something back and I didn't really have much to say. He said, "That's not good enough. If you're not offering advice about lots of things, then you're not really reading it closely," and I always took that to heart. Even my own stuff, I will edit it like crazy when I do reports for this kind of consulting I do, and I'll print off and read a thirty-page report. It's all marked up. My son, who writes for a living now, does all his work on the computer, but I still, when I'm done, [I take] a pencil, paper and edit and then type in the changes. It just works better for me. I see it better. I think about it better. I do some editing online, but I'm still comfortable working on printed copy.

What else at Duke? Duke is an unbelievable campus. I made money directing traffic at football games and basketball games, trying to make a few bucks. I'm not sure how I supported myself. I did get a fellowship. I got the Calvin Hoover Fellowship, I don't know if it was for a couple of years. So, I was funded in my second and third year. I had to pay for the first year myself and paid off that loan fairly quickly once we got married and I had a job. So, it wasn't a big loan and I don't know in relative dollars today, but I had to pay off that loan. So, I had to cover my own room and board, and I guess by being one of the people who passed the qualifying exams, I guess I got stipends for room and board and for living expenses after that. I'm grateful to Duke for that.

The graduate student center was on the other side of the hospital from the main campus. We would typically walk through Duke Hospital, and it was just beginning to expand like crazy. They had this incredible system of colored lines on the ceiling, so if you wanted to go to different divisions in the hospital, you would follow those colored lines. It was a Duke dermatologist who ultimately diagnosed my skin problem correctly, because my mother had taken me to some, I was going to say, some quack, but old-time doctor who treated it with ultraviolet light. I don't know if that's correct or not, but this guy at Duke gave me Prednisone and it sort of cleared it up instantaneously. Then, I found a doctor when I came back up here, who would give me that, and then miraculously it stopped. I ended up with a different skin problem years later, which is a controllable and has actually gotten better again, a different kind of rash. This guy at Duke knew the problem right away, prescribed these pills and instantaneously better.

The other thing I remember at Duke was, in the spring of my first year there, trying to study outside on the grass. That was a mistake. The pine pollen, I totally shut down. It was actually my first plane ride home. I had to get out of there. I couldn't breathe, and it was my first plane ride. I flew home from a very rinky-dink Raleigh-Durham Airport. It had six gates. Before 9/11, you just walked out to the gate. I don't know if I was home for a week until whatever

cleared up. That was scary that the pollen was so thick. You'd get used to it. You could see it on the cars, but it was much worse than what you would see here.

Then, the Duke Chapel, we all were sort of awed by the Duke Chapel and the whole Gothic experience, and the Duke Gardens were amazing. It was surprising to me that Duke had a bus system like Rutgers. Duke had what was effectively a women's campus like Rutgers, even though, at that time, it was already coed. There were more similarities, in some of those respects, than I really expected.

They used to tell their story about the women's campus, which had this three-foot wall. They got the money, I guess it was from one of the Dukes, to establish the campus, and the requirement was they have a six-foot stone wall built around the women's campus. Again, I don't know if this is a true story, but they didn't really like the idea of a six-foot stone wall keeping the women in the campus. So, they built a three-foot ditch and they built the six-foot wall with three feet below ground and three feet above. I doubt that's a true story, but that's the story they used to tell us when we got to campus.

We stayed on West Campus all the time. Again, it was interesting because in 1996--I left there in '73--in 1996, it may have been the first time back when I brought my son there for freshman year. We must've gone down to visit. We had to choose, again, jumping around a little, but he ended up having to choose between Duke and the University of Chicago. I can remember the day we came home--oh, they're up, so let me finish this and then maybe we'll pick it up. [Editor's Note: Jeff Rubin is referring to his granddaughter waking up from a nap.] I came home the day they got the letters, and he got waitlisted at Harvard, Princeton and Yale. [laughter] I don't think he would've gone to Princeton, I'm not sure. He would've gone to Harvard, I guess. He got into Duke and Chicago. My wife didn't want him to go to Chicago. She thought it was going to be too academic and that he needed to get more of a social life, but he and I visited Chicago and then we went down to Duke. The difference [was] that [at] Chicago, even though it was 1996, the student center, they had outlets in the floor that students could plug in their laptops. At Duke, when you went to the student center, they had TVs with ESPN on all the TVs. That's probably still a good description of how the two campuses were different. We liked Chicago. We thought it was very impressive, a lot of Nobel Prize winners, all that stuff in the sciences, but he wanted to be a newspaper guy. Duke's newspaper was excellent, and it led to a lot of connections for him and a great career. It turned out to be a great choice.

He was not the typical Duke student. [There were] a lot of kids from very wealthy families with very different backgrounds than he had growing up. He went to a public school with very mixed ethnicities and racial [backgrounds], and Duke still had a lot of kids from the South with very different prejudices. There was a lot of friction for him that he had to deal with. But he and his brother [grew] up in Piscataway, which had a hundred languages and every different kind of kid. He ended up being with the honors kids, so that was his group of kids and that was fine, but it was a much different experience than the prep-school type kids, who a lot of showed up at Duke. Do you want to try the same time tomorrow? Is that good for you?

KR: That sounds good. Does two-thirty tomorrow work?

JR: Yes. I didn't realize we'd have so much [to talk about]. Did you say these end up being 300,000 words, is that right?

KR: I will look at some of my transcripts. I will let you know tomorrow.

JR: We're going through pretty much everything I have told everybody at every time. I don't know if you've been that good a therapist to draw out anything I've never told anybody, but maybe we'll get there tomorrow. [laughter]

KR: Okay, sounds good. We will pick up again tomorrow. I will send you a link.

JR: Okay, I'll see you tomorrow.

KR: Okay, thank you so much.

JR: You're welcome.

KR: Okay.

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

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