RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GARY SOBO

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview session with Gary Sobo on June 10, 2016 in Newark, New Jersey on the campus of Rutgers-Newark. Thank you very much for coming in.

Gary Sobo: You're quite welcome.

SI: To begin, can you tell me where and when you were born?

GS: I was born January 31, 1943 in Elizabeth, New Jersey.

SI: What were your parents' names for the record?

GS: Daniel Sobo and Ann Sobo, previously Ann Ostin.

SI: Starting with your father's side of the family, what do you know about the family background and how the family came to the United States?

GS: Actually, very little. I found out only recently because everybody in the family had lost contact two generations ago that my grandfather was one of five sons, all of which lost contact with the other. They came from an area which was sometimes Russia, sometimes Poland, depending on who was winning at that point. He came to the United States and became a wholesale grocer.

SI: That was your grandfather.

GS: That was my grandfather.

SI: Where was his business?

GS: In Newark, New Jersey he was, yes.

SI: Do you know anything about your grandmother's side?

GS: They came from Russia and settled in this area. My mother was one of thirteen children, some of which had come over from Russia and some, including her, she was one of the youngest, were born here in this country.

SI: Did you grow up knowing any of your grandparents?

GS: On my father's side, I knew my grandmother and my grandfather. My grandfather died when I was very young, and my grandmother must have died when I was perhaps eight or nine years old. I never knew my grandparents on my mother's side. They had predeceased my birth.

SI: You were very young, but maybe you know this from your parents. Did any stories of what life was like for them come down through the family?

GS: No, I'm afraid not.

SI: Your father, was he born in Newark?

GS: My father was born in Hurleyville, New York. They were there for a summer vacation, and he was born up there.

SI: They were living in Newark at that time.

GS: They lived in Newark, yes.

SI: What about your mother?

GS: My mother also was brought up in Newark and Elizabeth.

SI: Do you know how they met?

GS: No, I don't.

SI: What did your father do for a living?

GS: He was what was then called a sugar broker. It's an occupation that no longer exists. He sold large lots of sugar for the refineries to grocery stores, grocery chains, restaurant chains, that sort of thing.

SI: Are you the oldest?

GS: I'm the only. [laughter]

SI: You are the only.

GS: I'm both the oldest and youngest.

SI: You were born during the war and your father was in the service during World War II.

GS: He was. He was in the Army.

SI: Do you know anything about your parents' lives during World War II, that era?

GS: Well, yes, I know both. My mother, who was left alone and lived here in Newark with me in an apartment, in the same apartment building as one of her sisters actually. She had some community there. My father was drafted into the Army. [He] went into the Normandy beaches probably two days after the invasion. [He] was then attached to the Illinois National Guard and was very seriously wounded outside St.-Lo, France, at which time he was evacuated back to a hospital in England and then went back into service, but he was only put back into service in Europe as a guard at a prisoner-of-war camp. [Editor's Note: On June 6, 1944, Allied forces invaded the Normandy region of German-occupied France.]

SI: Was he an infantryman?

GS: He was an infantryman, yes.

SI: Do you know if having gone through that experience of being so seriously wounded had an impact on his later life?

GS: He was one of four people who was sent out to set up a machine gun. A mortar landed directly on it, and he was out standing guard, so he was a little further away than the other[s]. The other three were killed, and he had shrapnel all through his body. For the balance of his life, he was under VA [Veterans Administration] care when he needed it. He wasn't a cripple but when he needed it. He had pieces of shrapnel moving around inside of him and coming to the surface and being able to be picked out. His other ailments were mostly a heart condition, which wasn't war related.

SI: You said you knew what your mother was doing during the war. Was she just taking care of you? Was she doing any work at the time?

GS: I don't believe she worked during the war. She did have a degree from Parsons School of Design as an interior decorator and worked as an interior decorator later in life on and off, but I don't believe that she was working during the war. She may have been. [laughter] I was so young, I was born in 1943, that I wouldn't recall.

SI: Do you know where you were living at the time?

GS: Yeah, 1 Lehigh Avenue in Newark.

SI: What section was that?

GS: That was right off Weequahic Park. It was an apartment building.

SI: What are your earliest memories growing up?

GS: My earliest memories probably came from Lehigh Avenue, but I don't have any remembrance of people. I remember my father pushing a car up the street once because it got stuck. Then after that, we moved to the Ivy Hill section, Midland Place. I do have vivid recall of that, because I was probably five years old, six years old at that point and lived there for a while.

SI: Can you describe that neighborhood and what it was like?

GS: That neighborhood, we lived at 209 Midland, as I recall, was just being built, and they were two-family houses, one beside the other in one structure. I went to Ivy Hill Elementary School from there, which was a walk. During the period we lived there, it built up. We were probably one of the first houses to be populated on that particular block. Others were built and were populated after that, and the neighborhood got tougher and tougher. I remember when we

moved there, believe it or not, we had a policeman come by on a horse once in a while. [laughter] That's how semi-rural it was. Then, we got down to a foot patrol and finally then they canvassed us with a motor patrol.

SI: When you say tougher and tougher, do you mean there was more crime?

GS: More crime.

SI: Yes.

GS: Right.

SI: Was it a melting-pot area, or was it dominated by one group or ethnicity?

GS: I don't remember it being a melting pot particularly. It was mostly a white neighborhood of various backgrounds, of various ethnicities.

SI: You went to the elementary school there. You moved out later.

GS: Yes, I moved out while [I was] still in elementary school.

SI: Okay.

GS: I was still in elementary school.

SI: Do you remember approximately how old you were?

GS: I must have been approximately the fifth grade, so that would make me nine, ten years old.

SI: So even in that four-year span, the neighborhood got noticeably worse.

GS: It did.

SI: Yes.

GS: It did.

SI: Do you remember seeing any incidents or anything?

GS: No, no. I felt safe walking to school. I probably didn't know anything else, [laughter] by the way. I walked to school every day and walked home every day, and there was no concern about that.

SI: Was that a reason why your parents moved out?

GS: I think they were just moving up, economically moving up, at that point. He had come back from the war. He had established himself. His business was going well, and we were then able to move to Maplewood, New Jersey, which was a more suburban setting.

SI: He had his own sugar broker business.

GS: Yes, really he was a private contractor and had to place his orders obviously through one of the two major refineries to get them filled. After he had retired, they actually decided to do away with the independent sugar brokers and that was absorbed into positions in the refineries themselves.

SI: The question I wanted to ask before was you seem to know a little bit about what your father had done during the war. Was that something you found out independently, or did he actually talk about his experiences?

GS: He talked about them somewhat. My mother talked about them. I do have the newspaper clip from when he was wounded, because he was reported as deceased because the other three people were found and were deceased. So, I did hear a bit about it from him.

SI: Was he involved in any veterans groups that you know of?

GS: I think he may have been in the Jewish War Veterans [and] Veterans of Foreign Wars.

SI: When you were about nine, you moved to Maplewood.

GS: Right.

SI: What was that neighborhood like?

GS: That was an older, established neighborhood. The houses were probably built around 1930, and it was a suburban neighborhood. Again, I could walk to school. I was close enough to the school to be able to walk, both elementary and junior high, and high school, all three.

SI: What did you think of the quality of your schools in Maplewood?

GS: I thought they were good. I thought they had a lot to offer, and they offered a lot in the classes and a lot outside the classes also. I only stayed there until after my second year of high school, and then we moved again. At that point, we moved because my father's heart condition had gotten worse and we wanted a ranch house. There were lots of times when he just couldn't make the stairs in the two-story house that we were living in. So, we had a house constructed in Short Hills, New Jersey, and we moved up to there.

SI: Growing up, what kinds of things would you do for fun? What was your major interest then?

GS: What would I do for fun? Well, there were always people in the neighborhood to play with. We'd go to the movies once in a while, both on my own and with my parents occasionally, but mostly with my friends or on my own. Mostly it was, I think, hanging out in the neighborhood with friends that are there.

SI: Were there any organized activities like Boy Scouts?

GS: I was in Boy Scouts for a while. For one year, I was in a youth football league. Yes, they were available.

SI: Were you able to travel much outside of that area?

GS: We did take a couple of car trips to Florida that I remember, but mostly we stayed in that area. We had relatives. This was the aunt that used to live in the same apartment [building] as my mother used to live, in New York City, so we'd visit her quite frequently.

SI: In school, what interested you the most?

GS: We're talking about?

SI: Subjects.

GS: We're talking about which school, high school? Are we talking about elementary school?

SI: As you got into junior high, or maybe you did not go to junior high, but the equivalent of junior high and into high school, what interested you?

GS: Starting out, I was a voracious reader, and as I got to the high school years, I got more and more involved into the sciences, biology and chemistry. I came here to Rutgers, and I was a biology major [and] a chemistry minor.

SI: At that time, there was a big push to get people involved in the sciences. You would have been in high school around the time of Sputnik. [Editor's Note: On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first artificial satellite, Sputnik I, which triggered the space race between the Soviet Union and United States.]

GS: Yes, yes, I was.

SI: I know there was a reaction to that. Do you remember that time? Were they pushing people towards the sciences, or were you just interested?

GS: That was my interest anyhow. I don't remember being pushed towards it. As you know, I ended up going to law school. I'm a 1969 graduate of Rutgers Law. I lost interest in that, after I went in the Army or about that time, and came out and went to law school.

SI: Did religion play a role in your life growing up?

GS: Not much. We are a reasonably irreligious family. I think my mother came from a reasonably religious family. She would not have pork products in the house, so she was kosher only to that degree. My father I don't think had much of a religious background. I went through bar mitzvah and quit. I know as the generations have gone on, we have grown further and further from religion.

SI: Were there any cultural aspects of Judaism that were kept up in the household?

GS: We would have Friday night dinner together. We would light the Friday night candles. Up to the time I was thirteen, we would regularly go to temple on Friday night. Of course, I'd have to attend a religious school on the weekend, too.

SI: In the place where you were living, do you think you faced any anti-Semitism, either in school or around the neighborhood?

GS: I may have missed it, but I don't think so. It never made an impression on me that that was the case.

SI: Was there a mixture of different religions?

GS: There were. It was pretty much a polyglot of all religions and ethnicities around.

SI: Again, growing up during this time, it was the Cold War. There was a lot of fear about the Russians and use of the atomic bomb. Do you remember that having any impact on your life in Maplewood?

GS: Well, I remember the drills in elementary school, where you had to hide under your desk in case there was a bomb attack or file out into the hallway. Everybody talked about it, but, of course, it was like the weather. Nobody could do anything about it. I do remember the *Pledge of Allegiance* being changed to insert the words "under God" because the Russians were an irreligious society, so we wanted to insert "under God" in our *Pledge of Allegiance* to differentiate ourselves. [Editor's Note: In June 1954, Congress passed a resolution adding "under God" to the *Pledge of Allegiance*, which had been written by former Baptist minister Francis Bellamy in 1892.]

SI: You said your mom worked outside of the home.

GS: She did. She was an interior decorator and for a time worked for one or two stores in the area, and they would send her out on projects. She would decorate people's houses. Obviously, they'd get the things they needed from the store she was working for.

SI: Were you more independent at those times? Was that when you were in high school?

GS: That would be in high school and also a bit earlier I guess. Was I more independent? I don't remember being terribly independent. I would go home sometimes; there'd be nobody

home and, you know, change your clothes, go out and play with the friends. I don't remember being alone a lot of the time. She only went out on assignments. She didn't have a lot of floor time as a forty-hour week in a store.

SI: Were there any teachers at the high school level who mentored you or who stand out in your memory as particularly important or influential?

GS: My last two years of high school I was at Millburn High. Yes, I remember quite a few of the teachers there. One was a Mr. Friedlander. He was not only an English teacher but I was on the school paper and he was the advisor of the school paper, so I had an awful lot of contact with him. I also remember an economics professor that I had. I guess I can't remember him that well, because I can't remember his name. I remember him being a great teacher also.

SI: What do you recall about those two years in Short Hills before you would go off to college? What was that area like?

GS: Well, that area was even more suburban. There were houses on perhaps a third of an acre or so. The area we lived in were all new houses. As you remember, we had had to build a ranch house, so we were in a new house and it was a block that was being built up. It was far more wealthy than where I had been before and I know it was far more wealthy than we were. It wasn't a neighborhood like the others I had lived in that you would meet the kids that lived around you because you were so close. Houses were pretty well-separated. The blocks were pretty well-separated. I had to meet people at school in order to become friends with them, and some of them, of course, would live around me and some would be a ways away. You really needed a car at that point to get around. That was the first point, I think, in my life that I felt that a car was a necessity.

SI: Did you get a car then?

GS: At that point, when I turned seventeen, we had two cars in the family. My father, his office was on Wall Street in New York. I would drive him to the train station. He'd go. I'd have the car for the day. I'd pick him up in the evening.

SI: You were in high school.

GS: Right.

SI: It was the mid-1950s to the late 1950s.

GS: I graduated high school in 1961.

SI: In terms of culture and student life, what do you recall about those high school years? How did people dress? What did people do for fun?

GS: I remember a lot of parties thrown by high school kids. We did that for fun. I was on the student newspaper. That was a social network, as well as being something to do. I became very

friendly with the other editors of the newspaper. We would hang out a lot together. We would spend a lot of nights putting the newspaper together or late afternoons and have dinner together in the school because of that. How did people dress? I think you can look at any movie of that era. [laughter] It wasn't that different I don't think from what you see there [pointing to a photograph], khakis, a shirt.

SI: You said that this was a much wealthier area.

GS: Yes.

SI: Was there a clear class structure?

GS: No, everybody was wealthy. [laughter] There was no class structure. [laughter] Or almost everybody was. There were some people who lived in the village of Millburn who were not quite as well to do as the others, but they were still at least as well to do as the people that I lived around in Maplewood.

SI: Did you work at all after school or in the summers?

GS: I worked a whole lot of summers. Let me think if I worked during high school or if I started in college. I know I worked in college. I don't think I worked summers while I was in high school. Of course, even at two hundred dollars a semester, I needed to earn money in order to pay for tuition, pay for books. Summers I would lifeguard. In the winters, I would work at the Summit YMCA for a few winters teaching swimming, doing that sort of thing, watching the locker room, doing that sort of thing.

SI: Were you involved in any sports in high school, the swim team maybe?

GS: How'd you guess swim team? [laughter] At Columbia High School [in Maplewood], they had a swim team. I was just a freshman. I tried out, did not make the team. I did not get involved in sports at Millburn High School.

SI: You graduated in 1961.

GS: Right.

SI: How did you decide where you wanted to go to college?

GS: Through the back door. Well, I had decided I wanted to go to college. That almost was not an option in our family and in the area actually too. Almost everybody in that high school, I'd say ninety-eight percent or more, went to college. It was just natural that I would apply for colleges. I applied and got into Boston University. I accepted Boston University, and during the summer, it came to my realization that we really didn't have enough money for me to go away to school. Rutgers in Newark was the only option really, and I was lucky that I was able to apply and get in right away and then start on time in September.

SI: What do you recall about your first few weeks at Rutgers? What stands out about coming in as a freshman? What was the campus like?

GS: Well, the campus was far different from what it is now. None of this was here. This was all tenements that were later taken over by urban removal, urban renewal, excuse me. It used to be called urban removal [laughter] at times. We had various buildings through this area of Newark. We had two buildings that were across the street from each other, which were a physics building and a chemistry building, and those were down by [McCarter] Highway. We had several buildings along Washington [Street], which were used as classrooms. The administrative offices were in the older section of Newark. They had a house there. I can't remember the addresses of any of that, unfortunately.

SI: Given your interest, you probably spent most of time in the physics and chemistry buildings.

GS: I spent a whole lot of time there, yes. Of course, as a freshman and sophomore, you have a lot of required courses, so I had to come up to Washington [Street] also for things like English and the other requirements. Music I remember I took up there also. It was pretty spread out. It was not a campus at all. We were in the daily life in Newark really, walking around in the daily life in Newark.

SI: Was there any kind of student life then? For example, down in New Brunswick, they were still giving freshman dinks. Was there any of that?

GS: There were fraternities. I got interested in a fraternity that never really got started. I got recruited into it. They were trying to start a fraternity. It never really started, and they defaulted. They went under. There were other fraternities here. There were sororities here. There was a social life along that line. The school itself would have committees that would stage dances and one thing and another. There was a freshman orientation program, where the incoming freshman were taken away before the school started, to another site. All I remember is there were buildings there. It was a campsite, spent a few days and come back. Those were what I remember as the social outlets at that time.

SI: What professors or classes stand out in your memory, particularly the first couple years?

GS: My first year biology teacher, I remember, stands out greatly in my memory. He was just a great teacher. He was doing research and publishing about the effects of radiation on the body. My freshman English teacher I remember, Dr. Maher. I don't know why I remember his name. He was just a great character [laughter] but a real character, and I remember him vividly as well.

SI: You said you were a physics major and a chemistry minor.

GS: No, I was a biology major and a chemistry minor.

SI: Give me a sense of what it was like being in those subjects at that time.

GS: Chemistry, as well as biology, was three lectures a week and then a lab a week. I thought the lab in chemistry was the most interesting place I'd ever been. As far as a building, it was in the older building. You could see they had stripped down an old industrial building, actually, I think that one was a brewery, and put in all the facilities, the gas lines, the electric lines, the hoods that you needed. That was just an interesting building to be in.

SI: Did any professors mentor you or talk to you about what you might do for a career?

GS: I think the most mentoring that I remember is from the lab teachers, and they were mostly graduate students. They were going, obviously, for graduate degrees in chemistry. At that time, I was focused on being pre-med, so we didn't have a whole lot to talk about in that respect.

SI: You graduated with the same major and minor.

GS: I did.

SI: Your idea was to go on to medical school.

GS: My idea when I started college was to go to medical school. By the time I got to the end, that was not my idea. I decided either at the end of college or right after that, because I had a year then before I went to law school, that law school was what I had wanted to do.

SI: How did that decision solidify in your mind?

GS: I really don't recall. I really don't recall that, but I remember making out my applications while I was in advanced training, radar training, at Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

SI: Was there anything that led you away from medicine?

GS: Frankly, I didn't have the grades to get into medical school for one thing. [laughter] Dentistry seemed like an option because it was easier, at that point, to get into dentistry, but it wasn't attractive for me. Now, by the way, dentistry, I think, is one of the most sought after professions, but in any event.

SI: You were at Rutgers-Newark from 1961 to 1965. Did you get involved in any activities or clubs?

GS: Well, again, I was an editor of the student paper, *The Observer*. I just picked one up. I don't think we ever had a shooting on campus to report. It's gotten a lot more serious, the news has. I was a member of the student council. I was head of the freshman orientation committee, and I was involved in an inter-campus council of sorts.

SI: What was that between?

GS: That was between the Newark campuses. We had several campuses. We had a nursing division, which we considered a separate campus, and the liberal arts campus. We had a

pharmacy campus. I don't know where it is now, but it was in a different part of town. It was in Newark.

SI: I think the Pharmacy School moved to New Brunswick in the 1970s. [Editor's Note: A part of Rutgers since 1927, the College of Pharmacy, now called the Ernest Mario School of Pharmacy, moved to Busch Campus in 1971 after the construction of William Levine Hall.]

GS: Oh, okay.

SI: Starting with *The Observer*, what do you remember as the typical stories that you would cover?

GS: [laughter] As I say, it was nothing as serious as a shooting on campus. It was mostly news of what was going on in the clubs, with the administration, and the daily running of the college.

SI: Later, four years after you graduated, you were still in law school, so we might talk about it in that context.

GS: Right.

SI: In the early 1960s, was there any kind of student movement on campus in terms of free speech or early civil rights activity?

GS: In the early '60s, it was a whole different world. The only student movement that I remember is a movement to accept a bowl bid for the Rutgers football team. [laughter] By the late '60s, it was an entirely different thing. By the late '60s, I was here in law school. I remember sitting in the lounge in what is now the nursing school and watching the black students outside Conklin Hall, where we're sitting now, protesting for greater student representation in the college. I remember that their argument was that this was all land that had been taken from the blacks because it was all black tenements, not that they owned it, but they lived here and that they should therefore have a greater representation of the student body. Well, they should have had a greater representation of the student body, but, of course, that wasn't the reason why. They did finally get one. [Editor's Note: On February 24, 1969, the Black Organization of Students took over Conklin Hall to protest racial inequalities at Rutgers-Newark. In response to the seventy-two hour Conklin Hall occupation, President Mason Gross negotiated with students and agreed to institute programs to increase recruitment of African American and minority students.]

SI: Do you remember from 1961 to 1965, were there many African Americans or other minority groups on campus?

GS: Well, they were certainly a minority. They weren't unheard of. They weren't unusual, but they were certainly a minority. I don't remember many Asians at all. I do remember a few blacks, my interactions with them, having them in my classes, but I don't remember any Asians on campus.

SI: As part of the student council, what would you do? What would be your typical activities?

GS: I don't recall. I really don't recall. I do remember we had a budget that we spent somehow, but other than that.

SI: Would they put on events like concerts or dances?

GS: There were a lot of speakers on campus. They were mostly invited by the various clubs or interest groups, and the student council itself I don't believe got involved in that, no. They did have the funding for it. They were the holder of a large portion of the student budget, the budget that was given for student fees.

SI: You were commuting.

GS: Yes.

SI: What was your typical day like?

GS: Mostly I would commute by train. I'd go to the Millburn Train Station, come in to Broad Street, where I just came into today, and walk to campus, go to my classes, and do whatever activities I had, like the newspaper, and then I would leave and go back. I know there were a lot of kids that spent a lot of time in the library. I practically didn't know where the library was, being a science major. I really didn't have a lot of library research to do, but I had a lot of studying to do, so I could go home and do that. There was, as always, a lot of time between classes. I had a lot of friends, and we would hang out, do something during that time, go to lunch, do, as I say, the student activities we were involved in. That was pretty much my typical day. Some days, and later, not in the beginning of college but towards the latter part of college, I would perhaps drive to Newark, park the car, it wasn't so hard to park the car in an unmetered space at that point, and do what I had to do and then I could leave in the car. My only interesting anecdote about that is I remember one day I came down in the car. I went back by the car. That was a Thursday or Friday. I backed out of my garage at my house on Saturday, and my father said, "You know your plates are missing." I reported my plates stolen to the Newark police. [laughter] I guess the other interesting anecdote is also in college, during my latter years of college, the guy in front of me stopped very quickly. I stopped very quickly. I damaged his car. He got out, and I got out. I said, "Do you want my insurance information?" He said, "No, no, no." This was now in the evening. I was taking night classes as well I think to probably get a language requirement in. He walked away. He walked away from the car. He had a girlfriend in the car. Well, it turned out it was a stolen car. [laughter] He didn't care that I'd damaged his car.

SI: Despite that incident, do you remember feeling safe on campus? Was there any fear of crime or violence?

GS: There was crime around. I wouldn't say that there was any great fear of it. When I was in college, there were a lot of businesses downtown and there were a lot of businesspeople, especially at lunchtime, milling around. As that went on, that became less and less a factor. We

were, I wouldn't say alone down here, but there were very few businesspeople that were walking around with us during the day.

SI: Were you on campus when President John F. Kennedy was shot?

GS: I was. I remember that day. I was in a chemistry lab. I had no idea what was going on, and the person who was in charge of the chemistry lab put on the blackboard, "The president is dead." We had one very, very bright student who was a refugee from Hungary. If you remember there was a day or two when the Hungarians could jump out of that border. His family got out. He was in that class with me. He broke down. He could not imagine that this country was going to go on with the president being dead, with a revolution now to come, as he thought. As we know, the vice president stepped in. Everything went along as the Constitution says it ought to go along. The military didn't take over. He was very afraid of that. It was just something to see. I also remember I walked out of the lab, was going out of the building, and an ex-girlfriend of mine was sitting there crying in the lobby. [She] felt very attached to the president and was really devastated that he had been shot and killed. [Editor's Note: On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was assassinated in Dallas, Texas. About two hours after the president was declared dead, Vice President Lyndon B. Johnson took the oath of office and became president. After the Soviet Union put down the Hungarian uprising in the fall of 1956, several hundred thousand Hungarians fled the country. About 35,000 Hungarian refugees received asylum in the United States. In "Operation Mercy," civilian and governmental agencies processed the refugees at Camp Kilmer in Piscataway in the winter of 1956 and spring of 1957 in the first step of resettlement in America.]

SI: Did Kennedy hold any special appeal to you?

GS: Not particularly, no. I knew he was president. I liked a lot of his programs, but I wouldn't say I was politically terribly active at that time.

SI: Around campus, did you notice if politics was discussed a lot then? Was it a politically-charged atmosphere at that time?

GS: I wouldn't call it a politically-charged atmosphere as you might have now, but, yes, politics were discussed. People would get together in groups, and there would be a club for this one or maybe an ad hoc club for another candidate. Goldwater had quite a club here. [Editor's Note: U.S. Senator Barry Goldwater lost his bid for the presidency in 1964 in a landslide to President Lyndon B. Johnson.]

SI: Oh, really?

GS: He did, yes.

SI: In your own opinion, were more of the students of the conservative working class?

GS: No, I'd say most of the students were liberal, working-class liberal.

SI: Goldwater still had traction.

GS: He still had traction, right, even among the working-class people that were here.

SI: By the time you were getting ready to graduate, the Vietnam War was escalating but not yet near its crescendo.

GS: It was pretty close. Everybody knew that the draft was hovering over them at that point, and everybody had a draft card, which I guess everybody has a draft card now, but you're not going to get called. About as I graduated, they went from the lottery system of just picking names to the date lottery, where they rated the birth dates in order of who was to be taken first and who was to be taken last of the 365 days of the year, so that there was a little more sanity to being able to tell whether you were likely to be picked or not. [Editor's Note: From 1948 until 1973, there was a draft, albeit on a limited basis during the relative peacetime of the mid to late 1950s and early 1960s. Draftees served in the Army for two years. During the escalation of the Vietnam War between 1965 and 1968, an average of 300,000 young men were drafted per year. Many men of draft age opted for alternatives. Some joined the preferable services of the Navy, Coast Guard, National Guard and military reserves. Many stayed in college or graduate school, where they were granted deferments. First drawn on December 1, 1969, the lottery determined the order in which men born between 1944 and 1950 were called for military induction. Prior to this, the order of call had been decided by the "draft the oldest man first" method. In the lottery drawing, the nineteenth date drawn would have given all men born on that date the number nineteen. (James T. Patterson, *Grand Expectations: The United States, 1945-1974*, pgs. 598-599, 631; "Conscription in the United States," selectiveservice.us; "The Vietnam Lotteries.")]

SI: Were you making plans in that regard in 1965?

GS: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. I was graduating. I was not going to medical school, and I knew I was fair game. I signed up for Pharmacy School, and I also signed up for the New Jersey National Guard in Morristown, New Jersey. By the end of the first semester, the National Guard advised me that they would take me, so I dropped out of Pharmacy School and went away to basic and advanced training.

SI: Did somebody counsel you in joining the National Guard or was it just known that was a way to avoid being drafted into the Army?

GS: I had a close high school friend, who I was still in contact with now four years after high school, who was a member of that particular Guard unit and told me he thought there were openings coming up and that I should apply, which I did, and then got in but it took six months, eight months to do that.

SI: In terms of the pharmacy connection, did you have an interest or was it expediency?

GS: It was more of an expediency, and the college knew it. I didn't make the application under false pretenses. The administration, I think, was reasonably sanguine with students who did not want to go to Vietnam, did not want to get involved in the war.

SI: Was there a lot of anti-war sentiment, or was it that people just wanted more control over their lives that caused the reactions to the draft and the war?

GS: There was some anti-war sentiment. It wasn't as much as the other places that you've heard of, like Columbia or Oberlin, but there was some anti-war sentiment. It was mostly people just wanting to be able to regulate their own lives and really not believing that this was a war we should be in and not wanting to go to it. There wasn't the type of overt demonstration of anti-war sentiment that you might have seen in a lot of other places. I don't remember people in the streets with signs or rallies in the street.

SI: A big incident in New Brunswick was when history professor Eugene Genovese said he wished the Vietcong would win. Do you remember hearing about that?

GS: I remember the name Genovese, but I don't remember the Rutgers professor saying the Vietcong would win. I think that would be an unpopular view up here. People were generally pro-America, even if anti-war, and I think that the thought was more that we should get out of where we should not be than that we should either win or lose a war.

SI: When you joined the National Guard, what were the terms of your enlistment? How long did you have to serve?

GS: Okay, sign up for six years. In fact, all military obligation at that time was six years. Even if you were drafted for two years, you were still supposed to be a Reservist, but you'd never be called up. This was to be six years on Reserve and six months to a year of active duty. The active duty involved first a couple of months of basic training, for which I went to Fort Dix, and then whatever advanced training you needed for the specialty that you were going to have. I was in an artillery unit and was assigned as a counter-mortar radar operator. Being an artillery unit, our advanced training took place at Fort Sill, Oklahoma. That's why I was sent out to Fort Sill. [Editor's Note: The Reserve Forces Act of 1955 tried to build up the Reserves and National Guard by encouraging volunteers. The law mandated a six-year service commitment, with a combination of Reserve and active duty time.]

SI: Tell me about going to Fort Dix. What was it like getting acclimated to the military environment?

GS: Obviously, it was a whole different world. I went down there by bus, as I think almost everybody else did. They picked us up up here. We went down there by bus. You're given your uniform, given your haircut, told what your service number is. Now people use their social security number, but you were given a service number. You had to know your service number, because if you wanted to get into a mess hall to eat, you had to give them your service number. If you wanted to go someplace and get into any place, you needed your service number. I was shipped off to a barracks with my contingent that I was going to be with, the company I was going to be with, and it turned out that that company was mostly, unusually college graduates. Some had advanced degrees. These were mostly National Guards and Army Reservists that were going in for training. Even though the drill sergeants were drill sergeant-y, they were tough

and they gave you the lessons and gave you the PT in the morning, physical training in the morning, I think they felt very comfortable with this group. They left us alone a lot of the time, let us run it ourselves. I remember the first day or two, standing out in the cold. It was January and not a good experience, but after we got assigned into our barracks, it got a whole lot better.

SI: Was that eight weeks or twelve weeks?

GS: I believe that was eight weeks. We just learned the basics, how to handle your gun, marching, long hikes, getting in shape, and then you go onto your advanced training, which for me was Fort Sill, Oklahoma.

SI: When you went in, was that assigned to you, or did you say you wanted to be in the artillery?

GS: Well, my unit was an artillery unit, and I took whatever they had. If they had told me I was going to work on a gun or be in fire-direction control, I would have taken it, but the opening that came up was for a radar operator, so I took that.

SI: What was it like going out to Fort Sill? You had obviously spent most of your life in the Northeast.

GS: Right.

SI: What was it like?

GS: Oh, that was a whole experience. [laughter] That was a real experience. We got to Fort Sill, and life was a little more ordered in that you weren't going through an initial induction phase. You were told where you had to be and when. When I got there, I again met the company I was with, and that was a really varied company. I had people in there from all over the country and several Marines, some of which had already served in Vietnam and were coming back for training not as infantrymen but to be also radar operators, because there was a radar operator class really in that particular barracks. I did get to meet and live with people from all over the country. That's an experience that I never would have had, and I'm glad that I had it. Some of these guys, I get the feeling these Marines were in the Marines because they had gotten into trouble in their hometown and the judge said, "You're going to go join the Marines or go to jail." [laughter] The ones that had been to Vietnam were the less gung-ho ones, as opposed to the newer Marines who were just inducted and were gung-ho. They really did not even want to be in a radar-operating group. They didn't want to be in artillery. They wanted to be in infantry and go charge the hill. I also remember we had a commanding officer who was from West Point. It turned out I was one of the few people there, very few people, who had gone to college. At that time, in order to go to law school, as I say, I did my applications while I was there, in order to go to law school, you also needed to apply to the Supreme Court of the State of New Jersey, who would send you a certificate that you were qualified to go on. I remember getting the certificate one day at mail call. The Marines were absolutely stunned that I was a college graduate, because a college graduate in the Marines is an officer. During my time there, I got many offers to stay there and declined. Every week almost, I think I would get an offer to go to the artillery officer's school, which of course would have meant that I wouldn't stay there, but I

would be shipped out. Towards the end of my stay there, the faculty of the radar school also offered that if I wanted to switch to be a RA, regular Army, that they would have wanted to keep me there to be on their staff to teach the specifics of the radar. Obviously, I passed on all of that. I went back to life and went back to law school.

SI: Can you briefly describe what you were training for? You were operating the machine.

GS: Right.

SI: What were you doing?

GS: This was a Korea War machine and computer. As I say, we were an artillery unit, and this is counter mortar to find out where a mortar is coming from that's firing on your unit. A shell has a particularly trajectory. It goes up, hits a peak, comes down, all in an arc. The machine that we had, that we were training on mostly, and there were several types of radars that did other things, but this was the machine that was the counter-mortar one, would be pointed towards where we'd suspect a shell would come from and it would pick up the trajectory as it passed through two beams of the radar. It would then compute backwards where that was, and you would then take that location and call it down to what they call the fire-direction center, the people who pointed the guns, did the math to find out how many bags of powder you needed in, pointed and have the shell fired. Usually, the first shell fire was a sample, so to speak. It would go out. [Editor's Note: Mr. Sobo claps his hands.] You'd see the splash on the radar from where the shell hit, but you knew where it had to go. Now you could tell them, "Left three hundred meters. Down a hundred meters. Fire again." Then, they could fire for effect. By then, of course, the guys on the mortar have picked it up and gone away. [laughter]

SI: Did you do live exercises, or was it all classroom instruction?

GS: While we were there, I believe it was all classroom. There was no live exercise. They must have had some machine to project this on the screen, so you then find out where you computed back to and see the splash. We didn't do that live until I got to summer training at Fort Drum with my local unit. I'm trying to remember if we ever did any live exercises. No, I don't believe we ever had any live-fire exercise out there. It was all theory, and we did have the machines to work with.

SI: How long was the training at Fort Sill?

GS: That was approximately another two months, two-and-a-half months.

SI: Did you get to go off base?

GS: Oh, yeah. We were regular soldiers at that point. We had five days of class, and you were off for two days. You could do whatever you want. I would go to the local town, which was Lawton. I went to Dallas a few times, which wasn't too far. I had one friend there from my National Guard unit who had a car, so that helped. [laughter] We could go down there. That's about all I did weekends while I was there.

SI: Does anything stand out about life in Oklahoma and Texas as opposed to New Jersey?

GS: Yeah, oh, yeah. Even then, I think Oklahoma was a very conservative area. I remember going into one public pool there on a weekend, and they gave me a ticket. Then, I went two feet further on or three feet further on, and the guy took the ticket and tore it. I said, "Why do you need two of you here?" He said, "I'm here to keep the Jews and the Colored out." [laughter] That impressed me, having come from the Northeast. It was also a dry town, Lawton, Oklahoma. Actually, the state was a dry state, but you could drink. You could go to a bar, but you had to pay a dollar or two to be a member of that bar for the year. You're now a member of the club. It was a private club, and you could drink in it. Can we take a short break?

SI: Sure.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: To continue, you were at Fort Sill for two-and-a-half months or so.

GS: Yes.

SI: After you graduated from that program, were you on Reserve duty? Did you have to serve additional active duty time?

GS: You were supposedly a Reserve [and] had to show up one weekend a month, and then there was two weeks of a summer training drill, for which we would take all of the equipment by very slow trucks up to Fort Drum and have live-fire drills up there. Let's see. 1966, that was the first year. I had the first year drill. We went up to Fort Drum for live-fire drills. That was two weeks. Then, I came back and went to law school. My first year of law school was at Boston University. I found out I couldn't afford that after the first year and transferred back to Rutgers for the last two years. After the year at Boston University, I came back, and that was the summer that we were called up for the Newark Riots. That was '67.

SI: Before we get into the riots, what about that year in Boston? What was your first exposure to law school like?

GS: It was great. I had my own apartment or at least an apartment with a roommate. I loved the school. It [had] very good professors. I got a part-time job at their publication house of Boston University in order to help pay my way through. I had saved a bit of money while I was in the Army, so I had that to spend. It was a generally very good experience. Other than the Army, that was the first time I was ever away from home for any extended period of time. It was a very good experience to do the whole thing.

SI: That was the fall of 1966 to the spring of 1967.

GS: Correct.

SI: From everyone I have interviewed that went to law school, it seems like that first year was pretty much set in stone. Was that the case at Boston University?

GS: Yes, all the courses are required courses. There was a whole lot of reading to be done and a whole lot of research to be done, so I put in a lot of time. It certainly was labor intensive. As I say, it was a good experience. Boston was a student town, as it probably still is. I did very well that year. I did very well in law school.

SI: Did you have a sense when you went into law school what you might want to do for your career? Did you have a specific area of the law you wanted to go into?

GS: I think like almost everybody else I wanted to be a trial lawyer, and Boston University had a pretty good program for that. Everybody had to take the required courses for the first couple of years, so there I was taking all the required courses.

SI: Did you have to go to Reserve duty for one weekend a month?

GS: I did.

SI: Yes.

GS: I did.

SI: Did you go to a local unit up there?

GS: Yes, they let you transfer, so I transferred to a unit in Boston, which was also artillery I believe. Yeah, it was. I'd make my weekend meetings there, and then I went back and was reattached to my unit for the summer for summer training.

SI: What did you think of the people you served with, particularly officers in the Reserve, their qualifications and how they were as leaders?

GS: Being a radar operator, the person who was in charge of me was a warrant officer. So, he, to get to that point, really knew his stuff, knew everything about it and was a very good leader. As to the other people, I didn't have much contact with them at all, except for the two or three commanding officers. They had been around an awful long time and were very good at what they did.

SI: You came back from Boston University.

GS: Boston University.

SI: Then, in July of 1967, the riots in Newark occurred. Take me through that period and what it was like for you.

GS: Okay.

SI: How did you hear about it?

GS: That summer, I had a job with Burns Detective Agency in Newark. We had an office down here in downtown. I'd come down, and they would tell me what I needed to do for the day, what assignment I had, and I'd go out and do it. Every day, I would travel from up in Millburn down to Newark. The riots really started on a Friday, and I guess I didn't listen to the morning news at all. [Editor's Note: Following the arrest and beating of an African American cab driver on Wednesday, July 12, 1967, riots erupted in Newark that lasted until July 17, left twenty-six people dead, and cost the city over ten million dollars in damages. Years of social inequity, political underrepresentation and economic marginalization of Newark's African American population preceded the social unrest that shook the city in the summer of 1967.]

I had an option of how to come down to Newark. I would either come down Springfield Avenue or I would come down South Orange Avenue. That particular Friday, I came down South Orange Avenue, not knowing that there was a riot going on, on Springfield Avenue. I didn't hear about it until I got home at night and tuned into the news and found out, and then I got a call from my National Guard unit that we had to go to the armory the next morning. We went to the armory the next morning, packed up the trucks, the two-and-a-half ton trucks, and jeeps, and we went down to Newark. We set up a bivouac area in a park. I believe it was Branch Brook, because I know it wasn't Weequahic and it was a large park.

We were then sent out, not on patrol, but to set up roadblocks at various places to keep people from going in and out with weapons. We wanted to make sure they lived inside the area. I was set on, I think it was, Frelinghuysen Avenue. We were across the street from an Elijah Muhammad Temple. We were just [there] to make sure that people going into the area were from the area and not people from outside trying to get in. They were afraid that there were people who might have been snipers and other agitators trying to get in, so you wanted to limit it. We did come under fire from a sniper at one point. By the way, Elijah Muhammad was very cooperative. He let our people go up on his roof, so that they could survey what was going on from there. From one of the side streets, there was some fire that came up at one point. The state police came. We all crouched behind a police car, went down the street, and at one point, the state police said, "There's an open window. Everybody fire into it." [laughter] Not me. They had switched from their regular service guns to shotguns, and they fired a bit. We never heard anything else, and that was the end of that incident. [Editor's Note: Elijah Muhammad led the Nation of Islam from 1934 until his death in 1975.]

After a night at that particular place, we went back to the park. At that point, we were put out on patrol. The idea was that it was just a show, that really we were just showing people that we were there, that everything was under control. The area that we had to go through, my particular unit, was the Ironbound section, which at that point was a heavily Italian section, as opposed to the black section that I was in before. We went through the Italian section, and people would come out of their houses and scream at us, "Go get them. Go back and get them. Keep this calm." I do also remember something being thrown out of a window at one point in one area, and we had to go into the building, which we did. [There was] nothing going on, and we left.

By that time, it was declared over. We packed up and went back, a lot [more tired] than when we came.

SI: How many days were you there?

GS: Two days was all I was there.

SI: When you went through the Italian neighborhood, I've heard they would block off streets with their cars and things like that. Did you see any of that?

GS: No, no. I didn't see anything blocked off.

SI: I would imagine you were not trained for anything like this.

GS: We were trained for riot control in a whole different way. We were trained to subdue and direct a crowd. On a line, move towards the crowd, get them to move, that sort of thing. Of course, that wasn't what we were faced with. We were faced with people who were active shooters, and there were incidents in my unit, but I wasn't involved in them, of people being assigned to ride on fire equipment and being shot at or just being shot at generally. I guess I was shot at generally, just on the street corner.

SI: Did anyone get hit where you were?

GS: Not where I was, no, nor in my unit.

SI: Were you given instructions in how to interact with people when you were checking them to see if either they had weapons or if they were from the area?

GS: We must have gotten training on how to pat somebody down, because I remember that we knew how to do that, and we could do it and we did it. The only weapon we found was one guy was coming back with some cleaning [laughter] and clunk. The cleaning went against the wall and made a big loud clunk, and there was a gun hidden inside the clothes bag. Other than that, it was all pretty calm.

SI: How were people reacting to this, having to go through the checkpoint? Was there any hostility from the people going through?

GS: I think the people were more scared than anything else. We were standing there with guns. The first day that the National Guard was out, they didn't have ammunition for the guns. They weren't issued it. When we got there, we were told that was a problem, that some people knew they didn't have ammunition and would harass them. We were told to take the clips of ammunition and put them on the web belt of the gun, so that it could be seen that we had ammunition with us. The people that I met were just more scared of us than anything else. I remember going into one sandwich shop. It sounds like a Woody Allen movie, 170 hamburgers with ketchup. [laughter] Anyhow, we went into a sandwich shop for lunch, and it was a white-

owned shop. They wouldn't take our money for lunch. They were very grateful that we were there. I hope they made it through without being destroyed.

SI: Did you see a lot of destruction where you were?

GS: Yes, yeah. There were a lot of fires that had been set. That's why it was particularly egregious that they were firing at the fire engines as they went out. They'd set a fire. Come on, you don't want everything to burn down. The fire department was very, very active during that time.

SI: You described the incident where the state troopers were firing into the window. Did you have any other interaction with the state troopers?

GS: No, they generally left us alone. An officer would come by and check on us every few hours, but once the shot was fired, all of a sudden, the state troopers appeared as if by magic from the ground. I'm assuming they were all over the city and that they were very close to us. We didn't see them other than that.

SI: In the aftermath, there would be a lot of criticism of the state troopers, the National Guard. Did you ever feel any negativity directed towards you as a member of the Guard?

GS: No. During that era, I felt negativity towards me as a member of the military, because the war was so unpopular at that point, but not specifically as a member of the National Guard. There were other incidents outside of Newark where the National Guard acted badly and the National Guard got a bad name, but I don't remember any negativity towards us because of that.

SI: Was your unit deployed anywhere else, like to Plainfield or any other places?

GS: No, we were strictly in Newark.

SI: After those two days, were there any other times that you were called up for active duty other than your standard times?

GS: No, that was the only time. That was the only time other than the standard two weeks in the summer and weekends.

SI: What about in the late spring of 1968 when Martin Luther King, Jr., was assassinated? Were you on call?

GS: I'm trying to remember where I was at that point. I was here. No, we weren't put on call at all. I guess I was here, yes. No, we weren't put on call for that.

SI: Do you remember the reaction to King's assassination on this campus?

GS: Everyone was horrified. Everyone was depressed. We all realized it for what it was. It was the murder of a guy who was trying to get us to where we should go without violence.

SI: You said in the summer of 1967 you were working for a detective agency.

GS: Yes, Burns Detective in Newark.

SI: What would you do for them?

GS: Well, for example, I remember one assignment where they were called by I guess the administration at Newark Airport, that they felt one of their employees was stealing. They wanted me to go out and look in his garage, look around his house, make sure there were no items there that they felt had been taken, lots of suitcases and that sort of thing. I did that. Sometimes they were looking on background checks for people, and I would go to a school and ask about their record there. I remember I was sent to tail somebody at one point. I can't remember where he was supposed to go, but I remember that I had a '53 Ford that was bright green with horseshoes on the hood and it wasn't very easy to stay inconspicuous. [laughter]

SI: Had you done any work like this before?

GS: No, no. I was simply a college graduate and applied for the job. I can't remember even why I applied for that particular job, but it was certainly better paying than being a lifeguard, which is what I had done for other summers, so it worked out.

SI: Were you able to use those investigative skills later on when you were working in the law?

GS: No, I don't think so. [laughter] Part of the job is to make believe you're somebody you're not. For instance, you don't go into a school and say, "I'm from Burns Detective Agency. We're checking up on this guy." You say, "I'm from an insurance company, and he's applied for insurance and we'd like to know a little bit more about him." You would do a check with neighbors, but you wouldn't tell them you're with the detective agency. No, I don't think I've misrepresented who I am since [laughter] I left the detective agency.

SI: Was there any danger to the job?

GS: I hope not. I didn't perceive of it. I was not dealing with armed people on the other side or particularly violent people. They were mostly, as I say, background checks, the one fellow I remember who they thought was stealing, and another guy, I remember, the guy I was tailing was supposed to go to Boston. I was supposed to be ready to get on a plane and follow him and stay with him, but I can't remember why. No, I don't think anybody was armed.

SI: In the fall of 1967, you came here.

GS: Yes.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: You came here in the fall of 1967. Were there any noticeable changes between when you left in 1965 and when you came back? For example, how had the riots impacted the area?

GS: Well, certainly, first of all, there were physical changes to the campus. Conklin Hall, where we're sitting now, had been built. The law school across the street, well, it's now the nursing school, but it was then the law school, had been built. They were starting to develop a campus. They had demolished a lot of housing through this area, so there weren't as many people living here or milling around on the streets. The campus was a whole lot more socially sensitive than anything I remembered in college. In the law school where I was, there were black students, just as there had been in college, but certainly there was a greater predominance of black students in the undergraduate population that I saw. As a law student, I really didn't get involved in any of the social movement that was going on on the undergraduate campus, except to be able to perceive it, to see it going on. The law school was I think as it had been for decades and then has since changed quite a bit, but it was a very civil rights-oriented law school and the students that it attracted were interested in civil rights quite a bit and certainly quite a bit more than at Boston University, where they were more of a corporate culture.

SI: Do any of your professors from Rutgers Law stand out in your memory?

GS: Yes, and, again, I wouldn't remember names fifty years on, but I remember particularly the professor for New Jersey procedure was a very good teacher, very knowledgeable. I remember my estates professor, again, because he was a character. [laughter] The fellow who was the professor for New Jersey procedure had helped write the procedural rules for the state, which had been adopted not too many years before. Everybody was in transition from an old rule to a new set of rules, a lot of the states were. He certainly knew what he was doing, and he was a very good teacher.

SI: While you were here, did you just concentrate on school or did you work as well?

GS: After I got here, for the first year, I lived at my parents' home, and I think I worked at the Summit YMCA during that year. The next summer, I went and worked for the State University of New York in Albany in the counsel's office. I had acquired a girlfriend, and I went and lived with her parents up there. We got married that summer. After that summer, we came back and established an apartment here in East Orange, and for the last year, I was married and living with my wife. She found a job and was working at Veterans Hospital as a research technician, which she had done. She started at Harvard Med [Medical School] and was a chemical research technician.

SI: How did your interests in specific areas of the law develop over your last two years at Rutgers Law?

GS: As I say, I had wanted to be a trial attorney from the start. I took the courses at Rutgers, of course, that would keep me towards that goal, and at the end of my years here, I started to look for a job. The job market at that time was far, far different than now. I had wanted to move to Albany, because that's where my wife's family was from. Most of the attorneys up there thought that you should work for free or almost for free for a year or two while you learned the craft. I

also applied for two other jobs, one being an assistant attorney general in the State of New York, which I eventually got, and another one for the railway up there. The railway was obviously a failing enterprise at that point, and I took the one with the attorney general and was a trial attorney with them in what they called the claims and litigation department for almost two years. Most of what I did was condemnation, eminent domain. Then, I decided it was time to leave and went out into private practice. Anyhow, to go back to your question, which I strayed from quite a bit, while I was at Rutgers also, I signed up for a student project to defend criminals, part of Legal Aid Society, got to interview quite a few of them, set up defense and decided criminal law wasn't for me.

SI: At that time, had they started to introduce clinical-based education, or was it pretty much all classroom based?

GS: It was pretty much all classroom. I had the option to go with the Legal Aid Society, which I did, and that was the extent, I think, of the clinical portion of it at that point. There were mock trials you could do as a part of coursework and mock arguments for appellate briefs, also as a part of classwork, but, no, they hadn't really moved into any clinical work at that time.

SI: How had you met your wife?

GS: She lived in the same apartment building that I did in Boston. After I moved in, I needed some hangers. I started knocking on doors, and we met. [laughter]

SI: You went up to the Albany area and resettled in that area. What were typical cases like when you were working as an assistant attorney general?

GS: Okay, well, actually, I joined the attorney general's office and was assigned to the Poughkeepsie office, which is obviously a branch office, the main offices being New York City and Albany. It was good, because that was halfway between my family and hers, so that really worked for us. We were involved in eminent domain. We were building at that point Route 84, which is a major east-west artery. During the time I was there, also the state decided to take over Stewart Airport, which was then expanded. It wasn't only the original airport that they got, but they expanded for a lot of extra area, because of the flight path that they needed. Most of what I did was preparing for trial and eminent domain. Eminent domain is a practice where you are based upon two appraisals. The plaintiff and the defendant each have an appraisal, and you're trying to convince the judge that your appraisal is better than theirs. They'll usually meet somewhere in between, but it involved a lot of meeting with the appraisers, going out and looking at property, and trying the cases, non-jury trials, which I found was a definite disadvantage when I decided to leave because nobody who wanted a trial attorney wanted somebody who had done only non-jury trials. [Editor's Note: Eminent domain is the right of a government to appropriate private property for public use based on its sovereign power over all lands in its jurisdiction.]

SI: How would those cases typically go? When I think of eminent domain, I think of people fighting to keep their homes.

GS: Right.

SI: Was this more businesslike?

GS: Yeah, more businesslike. The Department of Transportation would be the negotiating arm of what we were doing, so they would try and negotiate with the people before it went to suit and they would try even afterwards. With our help, they would try and construct different proposals to make, so that if it got to us, it was certainly litigation and we were certainly going to deal only with the attorneys who they had representing them.

SI: Did you have to deal with things like environmental impact?

GS: Not at that time, not at that time, no.

SI: Why did you decide to leave after almost two years?

GS: It was going to be a slow progression up, and I decided I wanted to go into private practice, give it a try. Then, we moved to Middletown, New York, which is where I have been since then, since 1972 or '3.

SI: How did you set up your practice?

GS: Oh, okay. I got very lucky. First of all, I rented an office. I moved in. I rented the office actually from an appraiser that I had known. He owned the building. I had known him when I worked for the state. I had saved a little money, so I figured I'd put a shingle up and I'd see who tripped in the door. After a couple of days of boredom, I decided it was good to get out and meet the community, so I went around and introduced myself to a lot of people. Among the people that I went to was the county attorney of Orange County, New York, which is where Middletown is. It's in Orange County. I walked into meet the county attorney, who said, "Oh, you're here about the job," [laughter] which of course I didn't know about. I said, "Really? No, I'm not, but what's the job?" Well, it turned out that the job was to represent the college, and I had been a member of the counsel's office of the State University of New York, and to do eminent domain, which I had been doing with the attorney general. I had to do some other miscellaneous things, which I was thoroughly comfortable with. I got that job, and I was in that job for a little over eight years. That was a part-time position, so that was a real springboard. I could now work at the county part-time, collect the paycheck and keep the office open, which is what I did for eight-and-a-half years.

SI: You were also taking in other clients.

GS: I was.

SI: What kinds of clients would you have?

GS: I went from a general practice to mostly real estate, because it was expedient. Basically, you could turn a real estate file around in about three months, make your money, go on, and you

didn't have to be there minute by minute. I could be in the county attorney's office for a day or two. By the way, this is before cell phones. You couldn't give out your cell phone number and say, "I'm here any time," which a lot of people do now. I got mostly into real estate and built that up. By the time I left, I had a reasonably good practice. It was worthwhile, while they were going to a full-time county attorney's office, which I certainly didn't want to do. I was in a good position to leave at that point.

SI: Is the practice still going?

GS: The practice is still going. It's now known as Sobo and Sobo, for me and my son. My son does personal injury work. He started at Dechert Price in New York City, went to a personal injury firm in our area and then decided he wanted to go out on his own, so he came in with me. It was us two in the beginning, and we're now twenty-four attorneys. I have one other attorney with me in real estate and estates and that sort of thing, the general practice. He's got all the rest over in personal injury.

SI: Do you have any memories or anecdotes about how the profession has changed over time? Are there any particular cases that stand out?

GS: Well, I will tell you an anecdote about how the profession has changed. When I started, advertising was verboten, and there was a fee schedule. That fee schedule was published by the Bar Association. It was considered unethical to reduce beyond the fee schedule. Not the program that I had wanted. I had wanted to build a practice. While in my first few years of practice, there was a United States Supreme Court case, in which they determined that, one, fee schedules were illegal, that it was really in prohibition of competition, and secondly, they came out with another provision that attorneys could advertise as long as they were reasonable, not reasonable in price, but reasonable in the tone of the advertisement. I became the first attorney to advertise in the area, and every day there would be an ad in the paper in the real estate section, my fee, contact us, for which I got a lot of pushback at first, but of course now it's all forgotten I've been practicing so long. I was the first one to break the advertising prohibition in that area and maybe the first one to reduce fees well below what the set fee schedule was.

SI: When you say there was pushback, what do you mean?

GS: Attorneys did not care for me taking three hundred dollars when they were charging fifteen hundred or two thousand.

SI: Does that mean they would snub you at lunch?

GS: Yeah, they'd snub you at lunch. They'd grumble when they saw you. [laughter]

SI: You were not getting phone calls in the middle of the night.

GS: No, I wasn't getting firebombs in the window. [laughter] No, I wasn't.

SI: I would imagine it helped getting clients.

GS: It helped tremendously to build up the client base immediately. I do remember one case, when you asked cases of note, a case of note was as assistant county attorney I was also in charge of labor relations. We had gotten to an impasse with CSEA [Civil Service Employees Association]. They had, in violation of law, gone on strike. We brought a suit against them, an injunction to bring them back in, which we got, and then we sued the union for damages. I forget what the damages were. I think they were 750,000 dollars, but it was the largest damage award at that time that had ever been granted against the union. That was one case that I was involved in, a very friendly judge, by the way, because you could look out, as you were having conferences, you could look out his window and see the marchers out his window, [laughter] picketing the courthouse as well as the rest of the county facilities.

SI: You also were involved in community activities, particularly Rotary.

GS: I was.

SI: Do you want to share any part of that?

GS: I was a director of the local Rotary Club for several years, dealt mainly with planning events, getting money, giving things back to the community, planning the events to give back to the community. The thing that we had done as a part of Rotary International which is probably the most long-lasting is there was a push to get rid of polio, which still has a few reservoirs in the world, but we raised a lot of money and gave a lot of money away in order to forward the fight against polio.

SI: How did you get involved in Rotary?

GS: Again, it seems like everything is through a friend that introduces me to something, and this one was a legislator of the county legislature, who I had worked for, was a member of the Middletown Rotary and asked me if I would care to join, which I did.

SI: Are there any other community activities you would like to discuss?

GS: No, I think that is pretty much what I've done in the community.

SI: How do you think your experience at Rutgers-Newark affected your career and your life, not just getting a degree?

GS: Right.

SI: Was there anything unique about this environment at the time that shaped you later?

GS: Very much so. Newark and Rutgers-Newark was certainly much more socially-conscious than where I had come from and where I went, and I bore that with me and was more aware I think of what was going on socially and more attuned to helping other people with their problems because of that.

SI: You worked a lot with the real estate community.

GS: Yes.

SI: I know during that time, I do not know to what extent it was a problem in Middletown, but there were issues of racial line drawing in real estate in other areas. Did that come up, people trying to funnel African Americans or different ethnic groups to live in one area?

GS: I think by the time I got there and got into real estate, which was '73-'74, it was known that that was an unaccepted practice, and the only things that isolated the black community were the fact that they couldn't buy in other communities. Every once in a while, you'd get somebody who could. You know, you've got an educator or a doctor or somebody with a degree who had better income and could move into another area. No, that wasn't resisted, as opposed to when I was a child, I do remember it being resisted.

SI: In Maplewood?

GS: Yeah, in Maplewood, I remember some incidents of that case, where people would say, "Well, they came to look at my house, but I think they're black and I wouldn't sell to them."

SI: To go back, you mentioned the story of the ticket taker in Oklahoma.

GS: Yeah.

SI: More generally, did you face any anti-Semitism in the Army?

GS: I wasn't religious enough for anybody to realize I was a Jew. I didn't go to temple. I probably didn't talk about it. The only time I remember reading the Bible was in basic training, and I had a Bible with me, which was the *King James Version* with all of the books in it and I read it as literature more than anything else. No, I don't remember any anti-Semitism, but people probably didn't realize I was Jewish either.

SI: You just fulfilled your six-year.

GS: Obligation.

SI: You did not re-enlist.

GS: No, I took the discharge at that point. At that point, I was living in Poughkeepsie and obviously had a wife. Did I have one child? I probably had the child, too, yeah, so I was willing to move on that point.

SI: How many children do you have?

GS: We have two. I have my son, who's forty-five years old. He's in practice with me. I have a daughter, who's forty years old, forty-one years old, and lives in Maplewood, New Jersey, and she's a physical therapist. College education has stayed with the family.

SI: Did you encourage your son to go into the law?

GS: No.

SI: Did he want to do it anyway?

GS: No. As he describes it, as we've already recounted, I was a lot cheaper than other people. I would actually give services away. If somebody came in for something and it wasn't a lot, I'd do it and that was the end of it. Thank you very much. I guess we were walking through a supermarket once, and one of these people saw me and came over and practically bowed down and kissed my ring. It made a great impression on him. [laughter] He was with me. [laughter] Since then, he wanted to be an attorney. He has been, a lot of people want to kiss his ring. We're a personal injury firm. He does all of the intakes, and he makes sure that he does all of the disbursement of checks. He's the one that meets with the clients, gives them the check, explains what happened, why they got that amount, what the fees were. A lot of people want to kiss his ring too, because he's given them a lot of money.

SI: Would you suggest somebody go into the law now with how it has developed?

GS: Yeah, you've got to be the right person. I'd say you've got to have a streak where you will be able to go out on your own. As I say, we have over twenty attorneys working for us now who are much more retiring. You've got to be able to go and get out there. Yes, for that sort of person, I would recommend it. I think also that you could probably take it and go into a business setting. I have one nephew by marriage who has a law degree and ended up going into a business setting with that. I think it's still a good thing to have. I think a college degree, you're still looking for the job that wants you and it's a lot tougher than having any sort of graduate degree.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add?

GS: No, but I bet you I'll think of some. [laughter]

SI: Feel free to add. Thank you so much for coming in. I appreciate it.

GS: You're welcome.

SI: It has been fascinating.

GS: Okay.

----------END OF INTERVIEW----------

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