RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ANTONIO CALCADO

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an oral history interview for the Rutgers Oral History Archives with Shaun Illingworth in Hightstown, New Jersey interviewing--please, sir, say your name.

Antonio Calcado: This is Antonio Calcado, in Brick, New Jersey.

Paul Clemens: This is Paul Clemens, in Metuchen, New Jersey.

SI: The date is August 10, 2020. Thank you all for making time today for this session. I would like to begin by asking you where and when you were born.

AC: So, I was born in Newark, New Jersey, actually, on August 8 of 1961.

SI: We would like to get a sense of the backgrounds of our interviewees. For the record, can you tell us a little bit about your parents, where they were born, where they came from, and what they did in their lives?

AC: Sure. My parents were immigrants, came over in the early '40s, and migrated to the United States from Portugal, separately, I might add. They actually met here and lived in Newark their whole lives after migrating to the United States. My father was a boatbuilder, initially, and a carpenter later, and my mother was a seamstress for forty-one or forty-two years before she retired.

I was born and raised in Newark and, actually then, a product of the Newark school systems, moved on to Seton Hall University, worked my way through school, and that's my background. Then, I worked a bit at a design and construction firm that I was involved with.

SI: I am curious, both coming from Portugal, did your parents ever talk about what motivated them to come here?

AC: Opportunity for sure. They're from small towns that were very, very rural, especially in the '30s, late '30s. So, they came just about before the beginning of World War II, although the rumblings were already there. My mother would speak of the zigzag pattern on her ship as she came across, with the blackout curtains, and my father as well. Basically, it was all about opportunity and trying to make a better life for themselves and for their future family.

SI: Do you know what drew them to Newark?

AC: So, Newark was [an] immigrant community. There were a few places that had a large Portuguese population. One was Massachusetts, Gloucester, specifically because of the fishing villages, New Bedford, and then Newark actually had a pretty large Portuguese community as well. So, that was just fitting in with your community, and that was probably the three largest areas for Portuguese immigrants at that point in time. A small country, so it wasn't an overwhelming number of immigrants that would've come across, but it was a very, very, very third world-ish type of country, believe it or not, even in the '30s and the '40s.

SI: When they came to Newark, was the Ironbound, the large Portuguese community, there?

AC: That is correct. That's where they immigrated to, again, separately, different years, and they met in the Ironbound, yes.

SI: Did they ever talk about how World War II may have affected their lives? Did your father have to serve in the military soon after he got here, for example?

AC: So, he did not. He did not. He worked a number of different jobs during the war but was never called to serve, nor was my mother. My father was seventeen, and my mother was sixteen, and both of them immigrated alone. So, it was really just kind of fending for yourself. They, of course, speak to wartime experiences, but when you came from really having absolutely nothing to still having limited amounts, limited amounts of anything was more than nothing. So, it was kind of an interesting experience, even farming little patches of farms at what is now Newark Airport. The airport was already there, but not as large as it is today, of course. You had tenant farmers, so to speak, or people would squat and then have an eight-by-eight piece of land that they would farm and grow different types of vegetables, talk about what the city looked like, at that point in time, and about all the conservation of materials and all those types of things. Walking the railroad tracks--Ironbound--the railroad tracks to pick up coal that had fallen off the railroad cars to heat the apartments that they lived in. There were still coal-fired types of stoves that would be working in those apartments.

SI: So, tell me--oh, one second, one of my kids is trying to get in. [laughter] So, you were born maybe about twenty years after they came to the United States.

AC: Correct.

SI: Do you have older siblings?

AC: I have an older brother, eleven years older than I. So, there's a big difference between us.

SI: When you were growing up, what street or neighborhood were you in, and what are your earliest memories of that area?

AC: So, the first home I grew up in, it was a residential neighborhood, not an industrial neighborhood, but it was a six-family tenement that had a shower in the basement. We used to go to something called the bath house to actually bathe on a regular basis, because six people in the basement trying to bathe didn't--six families I should say--didn't always really work out. We later moved to a two-family home, and that was, of course, much more comfortable than the six-family tenement, but you know what you know. It was a residential neighborhood. Everybody was out at night and you sat on the stoops and the porches, and those were the types of things you do, and listen to transistor radios and the New York Mets on the radio. Those are the type of memories--and neighborhood schools. Literally, you walk to school, and there was my school.

My neighborhood didn't have a junior high school or anything like that. It was a K through eight school, and it was [a] fairly peaceful type of existence, for the most part.

We had our, of course, civil strife in the late '60s, and that kind of turned the neighborhood on edge, simply because of all that was happening in the city at that point in time. Then, honestly, the city kind of never really--it's made great strides today, but it's taken a very long time for the city to recover from, really, that civil unrest and the injustices that were happening within the city itself. Even then, it was fairly easy to recognize as to what was happening.

SI: So …

AC: I'm sorry, you cut out.

SI: When you were growing up, what was the name of the elementary school and that sort of thing?

AC: Lafayette Street School was my elementary school, which, actually, my understanding, is one of the oldest buildings in the state by way of a school, that's been running as a school. It was a fairly large, I'd imagine a fairly large school, for what it was. So, it had nine grades, and I don't think I ever was in a class that had--I mean, usually about four sections, as I remember, and I don't think I was ever in a class that had less than thirty-five people in it, thirty-three. Something along that number would've been a typical number. So, it was a pretty big school. Then, I actually went to Seton Hall Prep, when it was in South Orange, and I would take the bus back and forth every day, about a forty-five minute to an hour bus ride through the whole City of Newark, and then, ultimately, went to Seton Hall University.

SI: Tell me a little bit about, again, your neighbors. What was the flavor of the neighborhood? Would you say it was mostly Portuguese, first and second generation, or was it a melting pot?

AC: So, it was a melting pot. We had Lithuanian. We had Portuguese. We had German, still. We had Italians, a very big Italian flavor to the neighborhood. Poles. So, it was a pretty big melting pot of people. Most were first generation or immigrants--well, immigrants, really. This is where they landed, for the most part. Older people would, of course, stay, and the younger generations would typically move out to other places and that could be things like Hillside and Union and Irvington, actually, quite a number of different cities or municipalities, really. Not many of them were actually cities. So, it was a melting pot. There were all different types of people.

Then, it was the type of neighborhood where you had your local stores, for the most part, local shopping. There was one supermarket type of store that sat in the neighborhood. The rest were all local. You went to the butcher shop, and you went to the poultry market and you went to the fish market and you went to the produce market. The major store was, really, for paper goods and those types, canned and paper goods, I would imagine. But I remember, my mother would come home and she'd stop at the different stores on the way home to pick up--if it was fish what

was going to be the meal, or if it was--well, the butcher was once a week. Many times, it was done in that fashion, a quick pickup of something necessary for dinner, and then everybody sat down for dinner. That's the way it worked, but everybody was pretty much in the same boat. Nobody had more or nobody had less than everybody else. It kind of all looked the same, for the most part.

SI: In your household, did your parents try to keep up any traditions or aspects, for example, from Portugal in your home life?

AC: All of them, I would say. We only spoke Portuguese in the household, and so meals were all those flavors that you would imagine. There aren't a lot of holidays that aren't holidays we would have, but the meals would be--you would have codfish on Christmas Eve. I mean, that was just the way it was. You would have a roast on Christmas Day. There's a tradition of opening the new wine, which is on November 11th, and when you open that new wine--so, for years, my father made wine--you have chestnuts and wine to try this year's crop, vintage, I should say. So, those types or traditions were kept. Most of the traditions, again, because the holidays weren't that different, Easter, it was what was served what may have been different. So, Easter is always a big goat holiday. Goat is a big traditional dinner for Easter. Those are the types of things, more along the lines of food versus changing of holidays and traditions, because they were very similar.

SI: As you were growing up, going through school, what did you gravitate towards? What were your favorite subjects? What really interested you?

AC: History. History, that's always been a favorite of mine. I wasn't a great math student, but it was more the liberal arts types of courses, so history would've been something I would've enjoyed. I wasn't a big fan of--although, we probably didn't have it--but sciences until I was in high school. So, languages, I enjoyed languages, and I can now get by with at least three, so that's different. So, those were the types of courses, how things worked but not really from a scientific perspective, those types of things.

SI: Growing up, did religion play a role in your life at all?

AC: So, my parents were very religious, Catholics, and they, actually, were founding members of a church in Newark that still exists today, Our Lady of Fatima Church on Jefferson Street. So, they were very religious. I did all my sacraments and always liked the church, was an altar boy, all those good things that one might imagine. I'm still a practicing Catholic until today. So, yes, it was a big influence in our household, without a doubt.

SI: Growing up, what activities would you be involved in outside of school? Were there organized activities, or was it mostly just playing in the street with friends, that sort of thing?

AC: So, there were none that [were] really organized. At some point, I did join some Boy Scout troop, but it was much later on. Mostly, it was just playing outside with friends. So, I was never

in things like Little League or Pop Warner--well, I guess they had a Little League. I don't remember football, but certainly, there was Little League. [There were] none of those organized activities at all, ever, or even after school. So, interestingly, I don't believe, at least in elementary school, that there was after-school coordinated activities, co-curriculars. There certainly weren't sports, but I don't recall there being co-curriculars as well, just wasn't offered. So, basically, it was playing in the street with your friends.

SI: You mentioned you speak a number of languages. There is Portuguese and English, obviously. What other language do you speak?

AC: So, I get by pretty well in Spanish and it depends on the dialect, of course. Many would say, "Well, that's similar to Portuguese," but it's not. It's not at all. Many of the words are very different from one to the other. So, [it] actually makes it more difficult, because you fall back to your native tongue when you're trying to speak in another language. I can get by in French. I can do some of that. So, those are basically the four that I can get by in. I can understand Italian, but aside from ordering dinner, I can't go pretty much further than that, but I can understand what people are trying to say.

SI: I am just curious. Did that come through school? It was not from speaking with neighbors when you were growing up with different languages.

AC: So, French was in school. That was in high school. The others were--yes, it was the language of the neighborhood. Spanish and Italian were languages of the neighborhood. The neighbors only spoke Italian, so you had to kind of get onboard to understand what it was that they were trying to say or not trying to say. French, I took in high school specifically because I thought that Spanish would trample all over what I knew and make it more difficult. So, I thought, "I've got to go in a completely different direction," because it was mandatory to take two years of a foreign language, and that's how I wound up taking French actually.

SI: As you were getting a little bit older, becoming a teenager, did you go to work or go for part-time jobs?

AC: Yes, so I've worked my whole life. I was in the, probably, fifth or sixth grade and had--I was about twelve--and had a number of different jobs. One was--there was a rather large, large tenement home that was just around the corner from mine, and I would pull the garbage out twice a week and put the cans in the following day and it must have been thirty or forty cans. I don't remember what they paid. There was a butcher shop that was up the block that, at that time, I would make deliveries--just deliveries--work for tips. There was a church down the block--not the church that we went to--that we used to set up for bingo on Wednesday nights, or something like that. That's at the time that bingo was getting quite a number of people, because I believe that people are inherently gamblers, but anyway. So, I would set the tables and chairs up--and this was at that age--and then progressively move on to other jobs.

By the time I was sixteen, I was a short-order cook. I would get out of school, we used to get out at two o'clock, make my way to my job, and I would do the night, the dinner crowd. So, I'd work from like three to seven and close up and do the dinners. Then, in the summers and then holidays, we'd switch lunch or dinners, depending, and I actually became a pretty prolific short-order cook. I could turn out two hundred lunches in [an] hour, that people had for lunch, and moving burgers and turkey clubs and all those good things. So, I worked the grill--well, I started with the soda. So, it was three stations. You start there, taking the orders and work the cold sandwiches and then worked, ultimately, the grill, which was my favorite, working the grill. So, yes, I always worked.

I always worked through college. I set up my schedule around being able to work when I was in college. I never stopped working and as many jobs as I could. If I could add them, I would add them, because I had no issue doing that or, even then, side jobs; that wasn't a problem. That lasted for a long time into my professional career as well.

SI: You wound up going to Seton Hall Prep. How did you or you and your family reach that decision? Then, tell us a little bit about the school.

AC: So, we didn't reach the decision together. It was a mandate. My father never had and my mother never had more than a fourth-grade education, and that was it, very elementary type of education. So, they valued education tremendously, because of influence of their friends, whomever that was. I don't recall now, but that was it. That's where you had to go, and you went and it was a one-way decision that was made. So, I went.

The school was a traditionally Catholic school that offered all your typical high school courses, your algebras and your biologies and your physics, and of course, the languages and history courses and those types of things. Then, I had co-curricular and athletic events as well, or I should say, their athletic program. I never participated in any of those.

So, the school started at eight. I had to catch, maybe, what was a six-fifty bus or something like that out of Ferry Street in Newark. I'd make my way all the way up South Orange Avenue, all the way to South Orange, and then when school was out, [I would] haul myself down to the bus stop to get on the bus for the reverse trip. I was never involved in a co-curricular or [an] athletic team, ever, simply because I just didn't have the time. I worked; I wanted to work. It was a long haul, and if you were in a co-curricular, and especially athletics, that would put you into nightfall to come all the way back home and getting home at whatever hour it is that you might be getting home at. So, I chose not--well, not sure I actually had a choice there either, but let's call it my choice. We can go from there, but, no, I never was involved in that.

SI: I would imagine, it was a mix of lay and religious teachers.

AC: Yes.

SI: Did you have mostly folks who were in your order?

AC: No. Interestingly, it was mostly lay teachers, as I recall. So, on any given--if you break it down by semesters--if I had six or seven courses, if I had two people of a religious order, which could've been a brother or could've been a priest or could've been a nun, actually. We had a few sisters who were teachers. That would've been about it. It wasn't an overabundance. They had what was a called a headmaster who was a priest, and the dean of students, who kind of ran the school. He was a layperson, as were most of the administration--was all laypeople, for the most part.

SI: Was there anybody in high school particularly who served as a mentor that kind of directed you when you were thinking about college or thinking about what you might do for a career?

AC: Not a one, no one. You think back now, especially in the business that I'm in now, and think about what may have been all the opportunities that were there to avail yourself of, and the key was just go to college. It wasn't about even the co-curriculars around college, or Greek life, or anything of that nature. No, there was no one, at least for me, that was mentoring me in that way, either in school or outside of school. It was a natural progression to go to college. It was unspoken that that's what you would be doing, again, the value of education.

SI: Did your older brother go to college? Had he been able to do that?

AC: So, he had started but never finished, which added a little more pressure. Interestingly, there's no especially fond memories of high school or college, neither one. It's just more like, "This is what you do," almost like a job. "From eight to two or eight to three, this is what you do." Then, the best part of college was that after your first year, you kind of were able to slot in when you could be there and when you couldn't be there. I tried a lot to do nights, just simply because it worked better for me. The only difference was I wasn't riding a bus; I was actually driving there. That was the difference, but the campus was the same campus at that time. Now, they're separated, but at that time, it was the same campus.

SI: In terms of going to Seton Hall for college, it seems like it was just a natural progression to go from the prep school to the university. What year did you graduate from prep and go into the university?

AC: '79.

SI: Okay.

AC: '79.

SI: It sounds like you commuted the whole time.

AC: I did. I commuted the whole time. So, I'd never had that--again, the irony--I never had that experience of living on campus or anything along those lines. I made some friends, none of

which I am in contact with today. In my major, we had a small cohort of people that used to kind of bounce around together, but we took a lot of the courses together. That's really how it happened. When you start to get towards your third year, your junior year, and you're really now concentrating on your major, you kind of wind up that way. It wasn't that big a school, so you'd fall into those types of groups or groupings.

SI: Can you hear me now?

AC: I can hear you.

SI: Okay, yes, I am having trouble with the mute button not clicking off and on when I want it to. What was your major?

AC: So, my major was political science, and again, it was an interest on my part of history, politics, at that point already. I remember as a kid, I would read the newspaper, because in the summer, we were home. I remember sitting in the backyard, and we had a garage--we didn't have grass or anything--we just had a garage and I'd sit in the garage and read *The Star-Ledger*, at that time, from cover to cover every day. I enjoyed that. I enjoyed it a lot. So, I already very much enjoyed politics, how things worked, and history, specifically that area. I don't know if that was me or my parents, I had an inkling of maybe going to law school. Going to law school, at that point in time, a great progression would be to major in political science or history or something along those lines. You really didn't see people then majoring in business and then going to law school. Today's kind of a whole different story, but there was almost a progression. You couldn't become a doctor if you didn't have all the science courses behind you; you'd never get into medical school. It was a similar type of situation. So, that was the thought process, and so I enjoyed those courses, as opposed to statistics, which I never enjoyed, but that was the thought process, how to kind of do that.

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

AC: So, we had one who was actually a lawyer that tried cases at the World Court, or something like that, part of the United Nations. (Manning?), I think his name was. He was really a very impressive type of person, so I remember him. I remember another professor who kind of seemed to be a whiz in constitutional issues, I wouldn't say constitutional law, but constitutional issues and deciphering the Constitution. So, yes, I think probably those two, but Manning was the one that was most, I believe, impressive while we were there. There was more of an international flavor, which I found fascinating as well. [Editor's Note: Located in The Hague, Netherlands, the International Criminal Court, known as the World Court, acts as the judicial body of the United Nations.]

SI: In terms of your work outside of the university, did you continue in the job at the diner or restaurant?

AC: In college, I had moved on to a company that was actually doing design and construction work, fixtures, for the most part, institutional displays, those types of things, for Macy's at the time, Federated Department Stores. I found that to be fun. I liked doing that, working with your hands at the same time and watching something come to life, and a lot of pre-planning that you do, you know, if you're building a display, how each piece of that is cut. This is before computers, where you could put in what you wanted and spit out how it's made. That didn't happen. The computer was in your mind. You'd lay out how to take a four-by-eight sheet of plywood and how you maximize, with very little waste, the pieces that you need in order to build that display case. So, I was doing that, and then doing--the irony--so I did that for quite some time and had progressively kind of moved through there as well and moved on to doing all the field measuring and reviewing the drawings for accuracy. Once you have a pretty good flavor for it, you can move on pretty well. So, that's what I was doing, and I continued to do that even after I was done with college. So, it became a full-time job, earned a decent living at it.

Then, the early '90s, we had an economic crisis, and places like that got really hurt badly because big companies, many of them declared bankruptcy, and smaller companies like this were kind of left holding the bag, so to speak. For lack of a better analogy, they were left with ten cents on a dollar, or something along those lines. So, they got burned really badly.

SI: All right. You would have graduated in 1983.

AC: '83.

SI: Yes. At that point, were you looking at graduate school, or were you just looking to get into the workforce?

AC: At that point, it was time to move on. I was making some money, and I was looking to start some kind of a career. So, I wasn't looking at graduate school. It was still in my mind and still even law school, but I wasn't looking at going right in it, at that point in time. Life starts to catch up to you a little bit.

SI: Did you continue to live in Newark?

AC: I did. I lived in Newark until I was married, and we still lived in Newark then. Then, in '86, I guess, '85-'86, I bought a small, small home that needed to be completely rebuilt and gutted it. Then, it took about nine months to rebuild it and put it together. Then, ultimately, we moved into that house, and that's when I moved out of Newark. So, I probably moved out of Newark around '86, I want to say, '86-'87, something like that.

SI: You were with this company doing the displays until the early '90s, you said.

AC: Until the early '90s.

SI: Yes. Would you mostly work in New York, or would you go around the region?

AC: Everywhere, stores in New York, everything from Herald Square, actually, down to Washington, D.C. We had a client that was a national chain that were opening stores, a boutique, San Francisco, Florida, pretty much across the country. We would build the store in a shop, take it all apart, put it in trailers and ship it off, and then go out, two or three days, put it together again on site. So, it was like a pre-made store when they got out there.

SI: Tell us about that transition period, when the economic downturn damaged that industry a bit. How did you decide what your next move was going to be?

AC: I think life decided it for me. In the early '90s, late '80s, early '90s, the economy was really terrible, and I, at some point, was actually doing a few different jobs, all of them pretty much working with your hands. So, I was doing some measuring for different companies, and I was doing a few different things. I started to apply for jobs, and I applied for a job at Rutgers. This is '93 now. This is the days of you'd send out your resume to everywhere via mail, and you actually saw jobs in the paper. This is pre-Internet, anything along those lines, and you'd scour the newspapers--good training when I was a kid, see, to scour the newspapers. [I would] scour the newspapers and look, especially on Sundays, at the whole section; that was all about employment. You might send out forty resumes on a Sunday. You'd just send them out, cover letters. So, that's in the early '90s.

One of the ones that caught my eye, it was the lowest level management position in facilities at Rutgers. It was, at that time, a planner's job, and so I applied to it and lo and behold, a few months later, got called for an interview and a few months after that got hired for the position. So, I started in--I think this probably all started in--I don't know--earlier, late spring of '93, and I actually started at Rutgers in November of '93. It was just by more luck than brains. It was just the skill sets I had were the skill sets I think that aligned with what the university was looking for. It just kind of happened in some way. There was no magic to that.

PC: I would like to break in and circle back. I did not want to break the flow of this, but before we go too far forward, I wondered if you could comment a little bit more about--you would have been a late pre-teen at this point--what it was like for you in Newark when there was what today we call uprisings, but everybody called riots in the late '60s. They were mostly involving African Americans, although there was also a Puerto Rican uprising in Newark. I wonder what went on in your neighborhood, what your family told you about it. What was it like for you as a child? Was it fearful? Was it something that was distant from you, something that was a daily worry? What was it like to be in that experience?

AC: So, I remember it vividly, and I remember actually more than one time. So, you had '67, and then, I think, '69 again. It was a mini-er uprising--I shouldn't say uprising, that's the wrong word--but there were issues again. I remember it vividly for a number of reasons. First and foremost, we lived in the East Ward. We lived not too far from what was the train line for Penn Station, along Route 21 in Newark. I remember, if we went out and we had to go on to 21 to get somewhere, there was barbed wire that was pulled across, and the National Guard would open it

and then close it again behind you as you passed through. You could also see the fires burning with no issue whatsoever from where we were, the glow in the sky, not the flames themselves.

While it wasn't that far to downtown Newark--you couldn't see the flames--but as the crow flies--I don't think it's a mile--it's probably half a mile. It's an easy walk. We would walk, for us, it was uptown, not downtown Newark, so we would walk uptown to Bamberger's and Ohrbach's and Woolworth and Five and Dime and all those stores that were there, and it was an easy walk. Again, it was not a difficult walk. Penn Station, from my house to Penn Station, if it was all of a ten-minute walk, that's a lot. So, another ten, five, to get up to uptown at most. You could hear the commotion.

Then, of course, you could see, in the streets, you had National Guard riding around on jeeps. The jeeps had machine guns mounted to them, and they'd come driving up the streets and the constant, never-ending police sirens and fire engines and those types of things that were just happening and happening and happening. So, it was a very scary time. You worried all the time as to how bad it actually was going to get.

Even at my age--I was seven, eight, nine years old--you knew this was a bad thing. I cannot say--my parents--you could sense the fear, there's no doubt about that, and you could sense anger, there's no doubt about that either. These were not, again, as I indicated, highly--not even highly--they weren't educated people at all; they only knew what they knew. So, our neighborhood was fairly well mixed, and even two or three blocks, we had Latinos and we had African Americans that lived in the neighborhood that had been there forever, I think, literally, forever. I remember the families. What I don't remember was a lot of interaction. Then, again, I was younger. It was a phenomenally frightening time, I think, for everyone, and I think that that police and military presence actually, for all intents and purposes, didn't make you feel any safer, especially the military presence. I think it actually made you feel more concerned, because it was like, "What are you protecting against?" If you remember, the one thing that scared the living bejesus out of me was watching the news, because this is also during the time of Vietnam. You watched horrific pictures involving the military in Vietnam and the blood and the gore, because now, by that later part of the '60s, it was all on display. In my mind, there's a correlation between the two. What am I living in here? How is this going to happen? That's the best way I can describe it.

SI: Paul, do you have other follow ups before Rutgers?

PC: Yes, just one more question about this. Did it change your parents' opinion about the safety and desirability of living in Newark? Were they so upset that it fundamentally changed the way they were feeling about their life at that point in time?

AC: No, I actually would think they doubled down about living in Newark. They considered it to be their city. This was their city, and this type of behavior was unacceptable. My mother just died at the age of ninety-two. My mother lived in Newark from 1939 until 2019, and she would not have had it any other way. Never, never, ever did my parents ever think that, "Wow, let's

move to suburbia." At some point, they certainly--they moved up to the American dream--they became economically stable, no doubt about it. They certainly could have, but never, never, never, ever gave it a thought to move out of the city.

PC: Okay, back to you.

AC: You cut out Shaun.

SI: Oh, okay, all right. I was not sure if Paul had another question. Your father, I think you said, was a carpenter, at this point.

AC: Yes, yes.

SI: Your mother had a long career as a seamstress. Were they ever involved in unions?

AC: Yes, yes.

SI: Okay.

AC: My father was a card-carrying member who was years and years and years in Local 1342, I think, based in Bloomfield, and my mother was a forty-one-year member of the ILGWU. So, yes, they were. They were union members. [Editor's Note: The ILGWU refers to the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union, a labor union founded in 1900 to represent workers in the women's garment industry. In 1995, the ILGWU merged with the Amalgamated Clothing and Textile Workers Union to form UNITE.]

SI: Again, I am curious, do you remember anything like a strike or something that would affect your family for a long period?

AC: No, I don't necessarily recall it, either one. I can't remember them not working. I mean, there may have been, but not that I can recall ever where there was an issue.

SI: I just sort of saw a tie between your father being a carpenter and …

AC: Yes.

SI: … Then you were working doing what was essentially carpentry on the shop displays. Did your father ever teach you anything about his skill?

AC: Yes, that's influence. Yes, that's influence. Even as a kid, occasionally working with my father when I was very small, I'd go with him on Saturdays, on occasion. There certainly was influence; there's no doubt about that. You pick up a skill. I was pretty good at it. So, I was able to kind of advance it. So, yes, certainly. He retired though when I was in my early--I want to say in my early twenties, probably.

SI: How did your previous skills and experience help you in your job at Rutgers? What was the job when you first started at Rutgers?

AC: So, at the time--actually we still are--but at the time, we were set up in maintenance, I worked in maintenance--I started at the Busch-Livingston campus--and the way we were set up was these zones. The zones were an area manager and a planner-estimator were paired up, and then there were upwards of a dozen mechanics, let's say. The mechanics, you could have an electrician and you could have a plumber and potentially some maintenance mechanics. It was a mix, depending on what zone you were in. So, I was what they called a planner-estimator, and the planner-estimator, essentially, laid out the work that needed to be done, both short term--although, the area manager took care of the emergencies--it was short term and on a longer-term basis, and especially--when I say longer-term basis--it was the preventative maintenance program. You're making sure that in your area, it was aligned correctly and times, tasks, the right time a year. So, in other words, you don't want fume hoods, where people had to go on a roof and you had a shutdown, to come out in January. That's not what you [would want]. You made sure that the timings were always aligned.

So, that kind of organizational skill, I had. It was transferring it from what I was doing and had always done to this mechanical portion, which I didn't have a lot. There was grasping what that was all about and transferring that and transferring that skill. It was doable. I didn't struggle with that. That wasn't a problem at all, and everybody I worked with, if I had a question--a good one or a bad one--they certainly were more than willing to work with me and help me and answer it and so I could get a better understanding.

On Busch-Livingston, there were probably, at the time, the way we were set up, there were probably seven of these zones, and the area managers reported to the assistant director for Busch-Livingston for maintenance. The planner-estimators reported to something called a work control manager, because, again, it was all about the flow of the work. We didn't report to the same person, but we worked side by side all the time.

Those skills were easily transferable for me, and what happened was that, you became--it wasn't just about maintenance. Projects, that's a big part of what we do. I knew construction. I knew I had a good handle on construction. So, you work with and you liaison with a number of different people, including the people that, at the time, were in construction management and they were doing projects. Maintenance did small projects and buildings. I managed those, but those bigger ones, you just liaison with the people in construction management. You start to build relationships, and I like to think you build those relationships based on--don't be the smartest person in the damn room and listen to what people have to say and execute on what you said that you would do.

In '93, I learned; I learned all about the preventative maintenance program, because that I had never worked with, but, again, it was a matter of organizational skills and understanding then what equipment needed to be used when and how and what the servicing looked like. The area

manager I worked with, at the time, was phenomenal, and he had a lot of input into how it should be set up and what he was looking for.

This is not pre-computer. This is when computers were just starting to kind of come into their own. We were actually using a program that was developed, I think, if I'm not mistaken, it was either the Illinois or the Idaho or something state prison system, but it worked, mostly, it worked [laughter], and a dot matrix printer and those types of things.

It was actually a lot of fun. There was no doubt about it. It was nice to work on these things and to make them happen. You were out a lot, and you kind of were on the campuses all the time troubleshooting things, those types of things. So, it was an interesting time. That was my job from about '93 to about '96, and then in '96, I was promoted. I'll stop there.

SI: Once you came to Rutgers, did you look to either get involved in some of the professional organizations or continue your education?

AC: I did become involved with our professional organization. We had something called APPA, which is Association of Physical Plant Administrators, which is a huge organization. It does both sides of the coin, by that, I mean the construction and the maintenance side of the coin. There were a slew of them, the custodial organizations, a grounds institute, because those were areas, in order to get ahead, I would need to work on those areas to understand how they worked or what the theories were behind them. So, I joined and worked with a number of them. I thought it was best for me. I thought it would work well. I knew that that was a career I could see that I enjoyed, and I saw that there were a lot of paths and upward mobility. You didn't have to be in maintenance your whole career. There was ability to move around. At that time, we had what was called green sheets for jobs posted, again, before postings were done online, and you could see everything that was open. There was mobility, I thought. I thought I had a good skill set that offered maybe the right things to the university.

SI: Did your colleagues at Rutgers encourage you to get involved with the professional groups, or did you figure that part out on your own?

AC: They did. No, they did. My first department head was heavily involved. I think the whole facilities organization was very much involved and very supportive of the professional organizations and, actually, both presented and brought back a number of different strategies. Even that zone strategy is something that was developed amongst a whole slew of different schools that was brought back and implemented. To this day, we still do; we still work closely with our trade organizations. It's been more difficult the last year, of course, because of Covid, but I think trade organizations are trying to remain relevant and us trying to remain relevant with them. Everyone's just so busy. It's at this pace that doesn't let up, that you can't really pay as much attention, at least I can't, as I'd like to, to them. Shaun, you're completely gone. I don't know if you can hear me. Oh, you're back.

SI: Okay, can you hear me? All right, yes. Can you hear me okay?

AC: Now I can.

SI: Okay. During that three-year window …

AC: Yes.

SI: … Can you give us an example of what would be a challenge that you would face? You mentioned you would deal with emergencies. Can you describe what an emergency would be?

AC: Yes. My area was not a large, large area, maybe a little over a million square feet, and it took up a number of science buildings on the Busch Campus. So, a bit of a challenge for me was learning how science buildings work, and literally, how do they work? When you look at labs and you look at fume hoods and you look at what's in them and what it takes, DI [deionized] water and those types of things, that wasn't an area I was familiar with. That just didn't happen that way. So, you want to talk about electric, I know how that works, or HVAC [heating, ventilation, and air conditioning] or carpentry or those things, that wasn't a really an issue, but how does a lab building work? What makes that function? How do these parts, components work together? That was just a lot of absorbing. That's being in it, walking it with people, people who know much more than I do about it, who are experts in it. So, you might have electricians or HVAC mechanics who understood how fume hoods and HVAC systems needed to work together, so you have the right amount of air and the right amount of air changes and all those good things. So, that was a challenge for me, to get up to speed on that, so that I could have a good handle. I don't profess to be an expert. I don't want to be an expert. I just don't, but to have a handle so I understand when someone comes to me and says, "Here's what our issue is." I can, in my mind, put together, "Okay, I understand what you're talking about" and then work through, potentially, what could be a solution without getting overly technical. That's not where my training is. Actually, I don't really have training, but that's not where it would be. [laughter] So, that was a challenge.

The preventative maintenance program I talked to you about was a bit of a mess. It has to be a regular, routine, ongoing program. You only have x-amount of hours available to you in a given week and then you figure in things like vacations and sick [days] and all of those. So, it had never really been done from that perspective. It was kind of implemented, sometimes really heavily frontloaded, sometimes things, roof inspections, again, coming out in February or March, you're not going to put somebody on a roof in those months, those types of things, or how it worked with the user, like researchers. You've got to shut down fume hoods in order to do your PMs [preventative maintenance checks]. So, you'd pick a week, you'd want to work with them to make sure you pick the week that works for them, because, honestly, they're more important than us getting up there to do it. That's the way it is. That was a challenge.

I remember, I had an office, where literally across all the walls, week by week by week and then placing these tasks into these weeks and the right weeks, so I could visualize it, I could see it,

and then taking that and putting that back into the computerized program. So, those were challenges.

Emergencies, they're always challenges, but I've always thought--even back in '93--and we had some really bad winters. I don't recall if it was '94 or '95 but really bad winters, where there was even issues about getting fuel because it was so cold. I remember, emergencies even then, this team, at the university, always rises to the occasion with an emergency, always, and it doesn't really matter what kind. If it's a dining hall that's burning down, and we had hundreds of custodians in there, within hours of the fire being put out, cleaning it to get it reopened. It always rises to the occasion. While it could've been challenges, challenges were more about, from where I stood, was more about accessing the right equipment for people to have, so they can do the job to make it work again. If you had a chiller--over at Lucy Stone Hall, they had a chiller. It was a six-hundred-ton chiller, one of the biggest you could ever see. If that thing goes down, I mean, it's not like you can borrow a six-hundred-ton chiller or go rent one. You'd have to get a series of them to try and work there. So, working the phones to get people in, to tighten up time schedules, those types of things in emergencies, that's what I did on the backend. I mean, the people that actually physically did the work, they were great. They always, always stepped up and always rose to the occasion.

SI: What was the new position you were promoted to in '96?

AC: So, I became assistant director of maintenance for the Busch-Livingston campuses. So, the guy I used to work alongside now reported to me, and something called the shift supervisors reported to me. I'd say about eleven people, I guess, eleven or twelve people, if I recall, reported to me. So, it was the area managers who managed the day-to-day areas, those zones, and then it was the shift supervisors that were the 24/7 operation. So, they were here when no one else was here. They're the people you would call, if there was an issue on campus, they were the first responders for mechanical issues on campus. Those are the people the police would call after hours. So, they kept a log, and that's when you would get calls all the time. You'd get them at two p.m. or two a.m., because that's what their job was. For the most part, they would handle most emergencies rather well without having to reach out or sounding the fire alarm, but there were emergencies. It's a big place, and Busch-Livingston was a big place. I worked closely with them. At that point, jobs shifted a little bit more. Now, you're looking at much more responsibility. Now, you're looking even more at your people, not just the people that report to you but the people below the people that report to you, that report to them. Now, you're looking at development. My first steps into, really, people development--that's not something I did before--understanding that people need to be paid attention to and they need to be developed and you need to pull them if you intend on being successful. I knew that; I knew that inherently. I did--that wasn't a surprise to me.

That's the type of work I did for a few more years. Interestingly, my first crisis, real crisis management on a large scale, was in those years. I think it might have been '99. It was Hurricane Floyd, and Hurricane Floyd came through and really interesting in that it didn't really do a lot of damage at the campus level at all, but what it did was the off-campus level,

specifically the water pumping station in Edison that supplied the Busch-Livingston campuses. I don't know if you remember, but there was a big contamination. It rose. It was ten feet of water there.

I guess Hurricane Floyd came through, I want to say, on a Wednesday, Thursday. I was home on a Saturday and got a call from my vice president, at the time, who asked me to attend a meeting. Again, almost fortuitously, there were some other individuals that they just couldn't get a hold of at that point in time. It was a Saturday afternoon. The meeting was with, at the time, Joe Whiteside, who ran the administration for the university. He was our CFO but ran the administration. There was the person in charge of public safety, and my vice president was there and one or two others. It was at [Old] Queen's. It was my first time I had ever gone to Queen's.

I go to Queen's, and it turns out that the problem was that we could not continue to service the campus in the way it was being serviced, with respect to water. We either had to demonstrate how we were going to lower the water usage to whatever point it was so that Middlesex utilities could continue to supply us, or we'd have to shut down Busch and Livingston. What we did was devise a plan that, essentially, put porta potties throughout Busch and Livingston, mostly, specifically, for our office environment. We locked down almost all of the bathrooms, and people had to use these porta potties. Then, we had limited showering for the dorms. Over the course of about a week, a week and a half, we were able to demonstrate how we could lower this water usage, continue to have people on Busch and Livingston, continue to operate Busch and Livingston. But all of that was a lot of challenges, locking bathrooms, restrooms down, so people could not use it. Those porta potties, first, it was getting enough of them. Within forty-eight hours, we had about 166--by Monday morning--positioned throughout the campus; then a schedule to make sure they were cleaned on a regular, two-hour schedule or something, I don't remember exactly, but it was something along those lines. I discovered that there are handicapped porta potties and there are left-handed porta potties and there are porta potties that are male oriented. So, it was quite interesting, from that perspective. So, that was really my first full-blown, large-scale crisis management. Small stuff, I'd done a lot of, power outage here, power outage there, but large scale, that was the first one.

Then, from there--that was probably '99, I'm going to assume--then from there, preparing for Y2K and the potential of the world coming to end in Y2K and spending New Year's Eve, Y2K, at the university, along with a series of other teams. So, those are probably two of the early ones, but Hurricane Floyd was the first large scale one. [Editor's Note: Y2K, short for the year 2000, refers to the computer programming shortcut that was expected to cause widespread problems as the year changed from 1999 to 2000.]

SI: When you said there was that Saturday meeting, was it the Saturday before the hurricane was predicted to come?

AC: That was the Saturday after.

SI: After, okay, all right.

AC: Saturday was when we realized the damage, while there was no campus damage, the damage that was actually done outside the campus that served us. This was a great lesson in you're reliant on more than just you. We're not self-contained. So, it was a great lesson in that.

SI: There is a thirty-second lag between when I hit the mute button. I appreciate you hanging in there. In just your everyday work in this position, would you have to have a lot of interaction with local townships or the county or that sort of stuff? Were you starting to have more exposure to working with local government?

AC: In that position not as much as my next position, as I recall it. There was some already, because we sat in Piscataway, but I was still fairly contained to Busch-Livingston. I was contained to Piscataway for the most part, so we'd have some interaction with individuals in Piscataway.

I actually became director, a first, of Busch-Livingston. When I became director, I had all of the disciplines on the campus under me. By that, I mean, it was maintenance, it was custodial, it was grounds, it was whatever other pieces were on the campus specific. So, there was a director for Busch-Livingston, there was a director for Cook-Douglass, and there was a director for College Ave. There were three directors, and these were fairly siloed organizations that reported up to, at the time, an assistant vice president for operations. This was all operations.

I became director, and I was a director for a few years until Dick McCormick was hired in, I want to say, 2003 [2002]. We had a reorganization in facilities, and one of my colleagues then became vice president of facilities. I was promoted, at that point, to executive director for operations, which meant that all the campuses in New Brunswick reported to me and it was a whole personnel component that reported to me. Utilities reported to me; that was another area. So, then, at that point, there was much more interaction with outside entities than previously. That's when you started to work with all of the municipalities surrounding you. You had to have interaction because, again, everything here is very interdependent on each other. If you consider our size and if you were to put it all together, we wind up running what would be the sixth largest city in New Jersey. It's a big place with a lot of moving parts. [Editor's Note: Richard L. McCormick served as the Rutgers University President from 2002 to 2012.]

PC: Shaun, can I break in with a question?

SI: Sure.

PC: You mentioned planning for Y2K. Could you take us back to a little bit about your experience?

AC: [laughter] Yes. There was a fairly strong thought that in Y2K, computers were not going to be able to handle it because their clocks did not run into 2000s. They ended in 1999s. It was a really big effort on the part of OIT [Office of Information Technology] to try and make us work

[laughter] beyond December 31, [1999]. All of our business systems and all of our major building systems all have certain components that work on technology, fume hoods and what keeps the air running and what keeps all of the systems up and running. We have major powerplants, and we have a cogeneration plant. The last thing we needed was an implosion of these pieces to happen.

We put a lot of processes in place, determined what it was that we needed to keep a special eye on and looking at. We tried to figure out what could connect manually if we needed to do that and had these lists of what may or may not happen. Then, the three assistant directors had handpicked teams that would work with them. So, I had a handpicked team that worked with me. Joe Witkowski on College Ave had one, and John Psillis on Cook-Douglass had one. These teams were rapid response teams, and if something were to go down, they would go out and address that situation and hopefully be able to either manually bring it back up or secure it so that further damage wouldn't be done. That was our MO, secure it, if you can't bring it up, because sometimes, you can just secure it and come back to it at a different point in time.

Actually, the university dining prepared a nice feast for dinner. So, we asked everybody to come in, I think, for eight or nine o'clock, and we were over at Brower and had prime rib and I don't know what else it was, but it was a nice dinner. Then, we just really waited around. It wasn't really for work; you just kind of waited around. Midnight came and passed, and by about two a.m., it was like, "Okay, I think we can call this one," because we already knew the experience coming from the other side of the world and nothing really had happened. So, we were fairly confident that we were in good shape, and I don't recall, actually, having to go out and doing anything on that night. I think everything just worked fairly seamlessly. I remember getting in my car and heading back home, and that was it, my Y2K experience.

SI: Unfortunately, I lost part of that.

AC: I said we actually came in, we all had teams, we had handpicked personnel, and we had a nice little feast that dining services put together. Dining services was kind enough to put together a feast for us, a dinner, I should say, very nice. Then, we went back to our respective areas, and we waited, monitored what was going on. Luckily, nothing happened, as I recall. I don't think we had one call that night. Somewhere around two a.m., we called it and said, "All right, just send everybody home." We knew what had happened across the world coming towards us, east to west, and we didn't think anything more would really go on that night, so we called it. It was a big exercise in--well, it was a good planning exercise, I guess we can say that, and you had to be ready for it. It's better nothing happens than all hell breaks loose. So, that was okay. There was nothing wrong with that.

SI: I am curious, in this period, there were budget issues even then. Did you feel like your area was getting the support that it needed to do the job properly?

AC: So, I had a fundamental understanding that when it comes to budget issues, there's always budget issues at Rutgers. [laughter] There's budget issues and then there's budget issues. There's

some where we've had to take steps that we did not want to take, having to let people go, and that always pains me, because everybody has a story. I'm not being facetious when I say that. People have real lives, and these things make a difference. Today, even, people are dying. I always understood that in the pecking order, we were always the low people on the totem pole. I get the way that works.

Going back to what we talked about earlier about professional associations, the importance of professional associations, in many ways, is to understand what the best practices are. I'm a big believer that there is good that comes from every crisis, and what you have to do is find it. What is it? What can we implement? Even from Covid-19, there'll be things that we will do differently forever that we've never done before. How do you find it, how do you implement it, how do you make it work? I've never, ever--and I've been now doing budgets since I was an assistant director in '98--I've never felt unsupported. I've always understood that there are pressures, and we need to deal with those pressures.

Now, back in the earlier days, we'd have lines, which were--your position was a line, and we'd hold lines open. If you saw what was coming, and I always hedged my bets with lines so that I could manipulate my line management, and I did that specifically because I was looking to hedge my bets if there was a crisis--and there was always seemingly some type of a crisis--and take that and use that, instead of actually laying people off. That's always been part of how I've done business, with respect to budgets, and always knowing two very important things. We're not academics. We're here to support the academic mission of the institution. You've got to understand that. That's what we do. We support the academic mission of the institution, and we need to find those best practices that help us to do that in an effective and an efficient way. The third piece is communication. I mean, look, here's what we can give you for X, and here's what we can give you for Y. This is a joint decision. We're not lobbying for Y. We understand the money may not be there, but just understand what we can do with X, so that your expectations aren't here and we're giving you stuff that's here. We don't want you at the hundredth percentile and we're only giving you at the fortieth percentile, and then that just creates anger and frustration. So, that's always been kind of my thinking on how to best work the system to the degree that everyone is onboard.

PC: Shaun, can I break in?

SI: Yes, Paul, go ahead.

PC: Just a quick follow up on this. At what point in your career that you are describing did working with the various unions on campus become part of what you had to do?

AC: Early on. I've been hearing grievances since I was an assistant director, literally. So, I've been working with the union since '98, easily since '98. I forged phenomenal relationships, I believe, with a few of the unions that I worked closely with over the years. They know that I'm a person of my word, if there's something I've told them, and that's always worked both ways with us. So, of course, as my career evolved, I've worked with more unions, and now, with all of

them I've got involvement, but it dates back to then. It's interesting, because as it dates back to then, those experiences are invaluable for today. It's what you build on in a career. It's understanding what their needs are, what my needs are. We used to have town halls when I was an assistant director or director on Busch-Livingston. We'd have town halls. We'd have the custodians in, and I would do the town halls with the custodians and bilingually. So, I'd do it in Spanish and in English, because so many of our custodians, their native tongue is Spanish. I believe, really, they loved that, because they got to make fun of my Spanish, which was okay. That's okay, and it's almost like the grassroots, "Okay, this guy gets it. He understands what we're talking about." There are some that believe that working in a union environment, I don't know, has to be confrontational and off-putting and, I'm not sure, a number of other pieces. I don't think so. I felt that, well, that level sets; everybody in the bargaining unit now is exactly alike. So, you're not going to play these favorites. You're not going to have shenanigans. Everybody is exactly the same. It levels the field, and I actually, from my personal experiences, find it easier in that setting than when you wind up with people that you like better than other people. It doesn't mean I don't like some people in the union better than other people [laughter], but I'm not going to treat them different. That's all it means.

SI: You were the director when the McCormick administration came in.

AC: That's correct.

SI: Yes. How soon did the new priorities or new plans of the new administration begin to affect your work?

AC: Well, so there's kind of a mix in there. I think I had been actually promoted to a director, an executive director--no, maybe not--I'm not sure. I already had responsibility or some responsibility for Cook-Douglass and College Ave. Then, when McCormick came in, it was a complete change and difference made there, so just the sheer volume of what I was doing, and then, of course, what Dick was looking for. Every president has a reset period, where you're looked at, to pay extra close attention to what people are saying or not saying. Every president has their listening tour, and they bring back the information that they've heard and then you can either justify it, defend it, whatever it might be. I don't think any of that is helpful. It's just, "Okay." You absorb that, and you use it as you move forward. So, the volume of work, it wasn't so much; it was more the ability now to implement even different strategies in your everyday business that maybe you weren't doing previously and now, almost under the guise of, "We can improve this." What we did was we started to implement a lot of developmental strategies, people developing our people. We started to try and do that in a better way, even down to, we've always been proponents of things like a crash training program in English as a second language, those types of things. So, there wasn't a massive shift, except in the way that the top management of facilities was reorganized. That was the massive shift.

Then, halfway through his presidency, I think, about, the vice president for facilities moved on, and we had a new CFO at that time. We reported in to that CFO. I think in 2006, I was promoted to the vice president for facilities and capital planning. That was a different job, a

completely different job. That's where you're involved literally in what the physical plans for the future of the university look like, and that's a big step from operations. That's something that's really almost a unit, and it is a unit and a department onto its own. What does that look like? What you're trying to do is match up the academic program to the physical presence of the university and what, physically, it'll look like, aesthetically, what it'll look like, how are we going to move that forward, those types of things. So, at the time, we even had, I think, a design competition that had started under my predecessor at the time and just kind of didn't fare well as we moved forward, but it taught us lessons. To me, it wasn't what I would call a failure, because it did teach us lessons, and we had some of the biggest named architectural firms in the world vying to build a new building on campus or to design a new building on campus. We learned lessons from that too and some of the thoughts and ideas of what was going on or not going on. I think that was the biggest shift.

Then, the next biggest shift would be the merger and pulling together two major universities. That was a sizable shift, I mean, two of the largest universities in the country. How do you make that seamlessly meld together? It was a daunting task, but one that, for better or for worse, was pulled off and we are one university today. So, I was intricately and intimately involved in that as well. [Editor's Note: On July 1, 2013, the New Jersey Medical and Health Sciences Education Restructuring Act went into effect, integrating Rutgers with all units of the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey (UMDNJ), except University Hospital in Newark and the School of Osteopathic Medicine in Stratford.]

Then, of course, when Bob Barchi came onboard, Bob moved on to creating a strategic plan for the university. I have to tell you, a strategic plan makes my job a heck of a lot easier, because then I'm working towards fulfilling components of that strategic plan, not having to build that strategic plan. We always have a saying that, "Facilities follows academics," it's not academics follows facilities. We don't put a building up and then, "Oh, let's get some academic program in the building." I mean, that's the dumbest thing we can do, although, trust me, in years gone by, we may have done some of that. We want a strategic plan, so we can work towards the strategic plan. [Editor's Note: Robert Barchi served as the president of Rutgers from 2012 to 2020.]

At some point, Bob redid his administration as well, and that's when I was promoted to the position I'm in now [Executive Vice President for Strategic Planning and Operations and Chief Operating Officer]. That brought in a number of other areas into it, which included public safety and included things like REHS, Environmental Health and Safety. So, there were a whole bunch of other areas that kind of came into this. I'd really try to lay out, again, what are the plans as the university moves forward? Not the academic program of the university, but how do we fulfill the mission of the academic program? That's the institutional part.

In that shift, one of the positions that I wound up with is the Emergency Management Coordinator for the university. So, that's a position that has to be filled by New Jersey statute, and it's appointed by the Board of Governors, filled by statute. I was nominated for that position by Bob, almost by default really, and then the board approves it and then it's sent up by resolution to the state. What that does is put me in front of crises. We have an Emergency

Operations Center and all of our university operations plans. So, I become the face and literally the coordinator for the university for emergencies, including pandemics. Who would have thought that a pandemic would've been one that we would've planned for and have to execute and all those good things? That's how I wound up [in that position], not by virtue of my executive vice president or COO position, but by virtue of that statutorily-mandated position that I am in. Even through that position, we've had other incidences. We've had the stabbing at the business school, for instance. We've had threats in Newark with an individual at the law school. We've had a couple of other incidents that we have a whole system set up for that we put into play, including weather. Most people associate it with weather, but that kind of now is the easy one to do, because it really is all of the different incidences that affect the operations of the university, and that's how broadly defined that would be put.

SI: When were you installed in that position?

AC: So, I think it was somewhere around '14-'15, something like that, '15 or '16, actually, in that position itself.

SI: Going back earlier, we will take an example, the first attempt to merge the medical school in the early 2000s, the Vagelos Plan.

AC: Yes.

SI: That really did not get past a planning point, but would you be very involved in doing some prep work for that or putting together something for it?

AC: Yes. There was some prep work that was done, which was more information gathering for that, logistics, sizes, those types of things. That plan, honestly, kind of lacked the commitment on the state's part to execute it. So, that would've been the extent of that prep work. It's much different than the detailed prep work that went into the 2013 plan or 2012 plan that took us into '13. So, yes, a little bit. I mean, at the time, it probably felt like a lot, but looking back, not the case.

SI: Unfortunately, one of the issues that universities all over the country have to deal with is school shootings, which became more prominent during the 2000s. Did that affect your position and the things you had to plan for?

AC: Yes, it did. Especially as you run through the 2000s and especially as my career progressed, your lens is different from one place to another place to another place. So, this lens today, this is a constant concern, violence on campuses, college and, of course, K-12s. That's a constant concern, of which we have no answers. We just don't have answers. Vigilance, of course, is one thing; there's no doubt. There are some physical protections that you can put into place--that's another thing--but, unfortunately, the best answer we have is a response and a response is too late. Something has already happened, whatever that may be. As a vice president for facilities and capital planning, we're looking at the physical pieces you could put in

place and what is it that we can do from a physical perspective, but you're not looking at response and you're not looking at post-incident. That's not my experience or my lens at that point in time. My lens today is actually more geared towards our preparation, training, in order to have some type of a response, working with other partners, especially in the mental health field, working with student affairs, for vigilance on the part of someone saying something if they hear or see something, and then post-incident, which is--once you've done your mitigation and you've done your response, that almost becomes much more difficult to deal with than that emergency piece right up front.

My lens has been different, and my education has been different, as I've moved through these, as I've gotten more involved in public safety. I don't profess to be a public safety professional, I am not, but I am schooled now, again, by virtue of my position and I understand what it is we do and why we do it. I fear--if anybody ever says, "What's that thing that keeps you up at night?" Everything else is fixable, but you can't fix somebody coming in with an act of violence that, in the biggest sense, you have no control over. We are a university, and by our nature, we are open. That's what we want to do. This exchange of thought and ideas is what propels us forward, and we are open and all encompassing. So, preparation, it's the opposite of being open and all encompassing, and that's that fine line.

It's the same thing as what's happening now with COVID-19. One of the biggest things we need to do is really break up everything that we've ever done. We're not built for segregation. We're built for congregation; every plan we have, it's around congregation. Now, we're de-densifying, a great new word we hear all the time. It's opposite what we've been trained and taught and what our business is all about, and public safety is, in many ways, the same way.

SI: Let me just pause for one moment.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

PC: One of the things I want to talk to you about, not today, when we come back, is your role in Hurricane Sandy, and how much of a preparatory experience that was for dealing with other crises. I want to follow up though briefly on what you said about the shooting. It is striking how different the way in which the public school system has dealt with that as opposed to Rutgers and colleges more generally. Everything you said today makes sense to me in terms of what I know. In my own department, history, we have a number of former graduate students who teach at Virginia Tech, and I have heard a lot of stories from there about the 2007 shooting, critiques of how they dealt with their horrific experience. So, I wondered--just quick reflection on that. I mean, with the public school systems, kids go through drills about this all the time, and there are people who sell them packages of videos that they're required to show in their classes and all that. Does Rutgers get bombarded with ideas like that? I know we have not done those things, but are those discussed? Do vendors come to you or to some member of the administration to say, "This is something all your students or all your professors should go through"?

AC: So, we actually do a training session for students in orientation before they come onboard, so that we do. So, I think you'll find this interesting how the world changes. When training began in the public school systems, it was, "Run to the back of the room, hide under your desks, pull as many of them together as you can." Now, we're telling people, "Get the hell out as fast as you can, and if you can't move fast enough, fight--literally fight--because you have no shot by hiding in the back of the room, unfortunately." So, these things are forever changing as we move forward. It's a shame, since Newtown, that children in kindergarten and first grade and second grade have to be trained in these types of events. I recall, of course, vividly, the fire drills and leaving the school and walking down the block and all of that, but the seriousness of this is so much more. [Editor's Note: The Sandy Hook Elementary School shooting occurred in Newtown, Connecticut on December 14, 2012, when a twenty-year-old gunman shot and killed twenty children and six adult staff members.]

We get people all the time--all the time--who are trying to sell us different merchandise. Some of it we look at, but I'll tell you, what we really look at is, A, public safety departments across the country also have their association--this is not of colleges and universities--and what are some of their best practices, and, then, best practices of universities and colleges, outside of public safety. What are those best practices, and what do they put into place? Those are the ones we really heavily rely on, and if there's a vendor or something we need from there, we will reach out to vendors and bring them in. They have a place. This, by the way, reminds me a little bit of--everybody sells N95 masks now too. So, there is a place for them. We really look more towards those best practices in what we can use and what we can implement as we move forward.

Just as an aside, even locking classroom doors is a problem. It's a major problem because of fire code issues, egress issues. While we'd love to run around and put a lock on every door, we can't do it. We're not allowed to do it. So, we have these competing issues against each other, and yet somehow we have to thread that needle and try and find a middle ground.

SI: I just have one final quick question for this session. Those of us who work in history are always promoting the value of a liberal arts education as foundational to anything you might do. Your undergraduate experience was in political science, which, on the surface, does not seem to necessarily support what you are doing. Do you see yourself drawing on aspects of your own education at Seton Hall for this job even today?

AC: You can't underestimate the value of a liberal arts education if you want someone to see the whole picture. That's my personal view. I probably just pissed off a lot of business majors and the engineering school. [laughter] I think that it gives you a different perspective, because I believe, unfortunately, that when you are in something like engineering, it is a little too myopic for me. So, you might take some liberal arts courses--don't get me wrong--but it's a different type of thinking, and that's fine. I can't do their work. I can't design an HVAC system; I just can't. When I see some of these courses like engineering, the five and six-year ones with engineering and business and you come out with maybe a master's in business administration, I think that is the way to go. I think the more we interject liberal arts into the curriculum, the better off we are, because I think it opens up different pathways for thinking, evolution for

thinking. That's my personal opinion. I wouldn't trade what I have by way of training. My technical training I've picked up along the way and you might have some predisposed technical type. I can't work on a motor--I'll tell you--a car, but I can build a cabinet; that's no problem. So, you might be predisposed a little bit. But I think the wider we do that thinking, the bigger blanket we throw out there. Mine was invaluable; my liberal arts education was invaluable for this job.

SI: Paul, do you have anything else you wanted to get into?

PC: Not substantively. Is it possible to figure out a date today for the next go around, or is that something we can find out later via email?

SI: I'll conclude, and then we will see. To conclude this session, thank you very much. We appreciate all your time.

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

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