RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM FERNEKES

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY
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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins the second oral history interview with Dr. William Fernekes in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth…

Brian Csobor: Brian Csobor.

Ilana Berkman: Ilana Berkman.

Michael Farner: Michael Farner.

SI: Okay, the date is March 6, 2020. Thank you very much for coming in today.

William Fernekes: My pleasure.

SI: We want to get into some of your activities since our first interview, which was about fourteen years ago, but, first, the students have been studying your first interview and would like to ask some follow-ups and get some more information. Who wants to go first?

MF: I can go first.

SI: Okay.

MF: I was reading up on how you were talking about the Vietnam War. I know you talked about it a little bit already. I just want to understand, how did you personally feel about it?

WF: When I came to Rutgers, I was pretty conservative, having grown up in a home where my father was a strong Nixon supporter. And, I came to Rutgers really with a very sort of conservative perspective, which didn't last very long. When I got here and I became more enlightened about different approaches to what was going on, I would say by my second year (and this was when the moratorium on Cambodia took place) I would say that my feeling about the war had shifted considerably.

[Editor's Note: From April to July 1970, American and Army of the Republic of Vietnam (ARVN) forces conducted the Cambodian Campaign or Incursion to eliminate Communist forces in eastern Cambodia.]

MF: Okay.

BC: I will go next. I read that you had a chance to go to Czechoslovakia during your time here at Rutgers. What made you want to go to a Communist country during the Cold War era, where it was like, "Oh, you should not go there?" I understand it is a fun time to go, but what is it that made you want to go to Czechoslovakia?

WF: Well, there were two things. First of all, I was intrigued by actually wanting to go into Eastern Europe. That trip was really transformative for me. I spent seven weeks in Europe backpacking, starting in Portugal and going all the way over to Hungary, then to Czechoslovakia, and then, back and ending up in Britain before I came home. But the real focus of it for me was

to learn more about myself, on my own, and then, couple that with going to places I'd always wanted to go.

Czechoslovakia and Hungary both required visas. You could not simply show up and [say], "I'm here." So you had to get a visa. My friend Bob, my roommate, and I went to Washington to get the visa for the Hungarian Embassy. We go in and it was a scene right out of the Cold War. This guy walked down the stairs. I think he was pretty much alcoholic at that time, because you could smell him about ten yards away.

He says, "Go to the other room." Fine, we go to the other room. We fill out the forms. Then, they send the visa back to me, which was only good for three days. The same thing, I had to apply for the Czech Embassy and they sent it in the mail. But when you arrived, you actually had to show up and show the visa, and then, if you wanted to extend it, you had to go to the police.

So, to get back to your initial question, there were two reasons to go to Hungary, and then, I'll get to the Czech Republic. My roommate Bob's family, extended family, lived in Budapest. I wanted to visit them, which I did. I was very interested in (and have always been interested in) music. So, I wanted to actually go to some sites in Hungary. I went to the Bartok Museum [honoring Hungarian composer Bela Bartok (1881-1945)], for example, and I went to the opera.

Then, I got on a train to go to the Czech Republic. I went to the train station, I bought the ticket and they said, "Just buy a ticket to the border." I didn't understand that, because in the rest of Europe, you had a rail pass, in the Common Market at that time. There was no European Union at that time. All right, I get to the border. Now, I've got to buy another ticket.

[Editor's Note: In 1957, Western European nations formed the European Economic Community (EEC), also called Common Market, which established economic and political cooperation. In 1993, the European Union was formed, further uniting Europe.]

All right, so, the conductor on the train, who was a close alias to Nikita Khrushchev [Premier of the Soviet Union from 1953 to 1964], I think--I don't know if it was his brother or not (I'm kidding), he looked just like him--he takes me off the train with a guy from Argentina. We go to the ticket window. I give the guy the money. He takes the money but doesn't give me the right change. He took his percentage. What was I going to do, call the police? [laughter] No, I just got the ticket, got back on the train. The guy from Argentina had the same issue.

Then, we end up going to Prague. Now, the other reason I wanted to go to Prague was because it was less than five years after the invasion. In 1968, of course, they had suppressed the Dubcek Velvet Spring of that time. When you were in Prague, there were squads with submachine guns patrolling the streets at times. So, I go to Prague and Prague is a great music city, fabulous. Mozart's *Don Giovanni* was there [premiered in 1787]. I mean, this was amazing.

[Editor's Note: Alexander Dubcek, First Secretary of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia from January 1968 to April 1969, attempted to pass reforms that guaranteed more civil rights, and Westernized the nation, a period now known as the Prague Spring. The Soviet Union and

other Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia on August 20, 1968, imposing a military occupation until the reforms ended and Dubcek resigned. The Velvet Revolution, peaceful protests in 1989, helped dismantle the Communist government of Czechoslovakia.]

In Prague, I'm inside a hotel lobby and there are all these other students. And when you're traveling at that time, you're looking for youth hostels and places like this, which are inexpensive. So, I go in there. I go in and there's no rooms for a single, none. Well, there's a guy standing next to me from Finland and he has two female friends. Well, there's no room for him, either. He looks at me, I look at him, and they said, "You want a room?" I said, "Yes, we'll do it." I stayed with him for two nights. I saw him, like, at night and that was it, okay, good. That was the type of thing you had to do. What, are you going to sleep on the street?

The other thing that happened, which is amazing, actually fascinating, was that because you were in a society where there was virtually no exchange with money outside of their closed economy, so they were desperate for US currency. Well, this guy approaches me in this other hotel lobby and asked me if I would exchange money. I said, "No thanks." He could've easily been part of the secret police. You didn't know. You just didn't know what was going to happen.

Prague, if you go there today, has been totally transformed, in terms of it's been cleaned up, it's been restored. At that time, it was very gray. I remember, on the famous bridge that goes across the Vltava River, the Charles Bridge, they had scaffolding that was all rusted. That's totally gone now. Then, on the way out of the Czech Republic, you're on the train to Nuremburg, Germany. They stopped the train and inspected people. No Czech money could leave--interesting, right?

MF: Did you ever take that train to Nuremburg?

WF: I did, I did. I was on that train. The inspectors walked down the aisle. They would look for people and spot check to see if you were taking any Czech currency out into what was, at that time, West Germany.

MF: Wow, interesting.

IB: What about your trip to Europe? What lessons did you learn that you applied to other areas of your life?

WF: Well, the most important was that I had already been dating my future wife and it made it obvious to me that this was the path to the future. I missed her a lot. Her name is Sheila. We've been married for forty-three years, got married in '76. She had come to Rutgers as the first class of women at Rutgers College in '72 and I met her because she joined the band. I was in the marching band. [Editor's Note: In 1970, the Rutgers Board of Governors voted to make Rutgers College co-ed. The fall semester of 1972 was the first semester that women lived on campus.]

I think the other thing that really came across to me was that all people are good. There are no hierarchies of cultures, that if you treat people with respect, they will do it to you as well. I remember one event that happened. This was quite interesting. When you go to Europe, at that

time, many of these youth hostels were in older buildings and one was in a castle. This was in Nuremburg, actually.

Well, they had curfews. You had to be in by a certain time or they locked the door, or you had to be out in the morning. One in Milan, I remember, at seven o'clock in the morning, they kicked you out. They played all this Baroque music, like, at *fortissimo* [very loud] to get you up. You had to get out, okay, fine.

Well, in Nuremburg, this is like a barracks, right. You're in there, there's bunk beds and all. I had a bed; I was on top, I guess. Well, some guy comes over to me and says, "You're in my bed." I said, "No, I'm not." He wanted to make an issue out of it. You know what? A bunch of other people in the room started saying, "Hey, leave him alone." That was the end of that.

Then, I'm in Amsterdam and I'm sick. I had a bad cold. I really needed to get to London, but the only way to get to London on the rail pass was to go to Ostend, Belgium, to get a ferry. The scuttlebutt was that there were hundreds of people waiting and it was crowded. I wasn't doing well. I go to the airport.

My friend Bob, from high school, his father was a travel agent, had given me an American Express card for, like, an emergency if I needed it. Well, I went there and I got in line. This guy who was at the desk took pity on me and got me on a plane. He didn't have to do that.

So I just found that when you're traveling or if you encounter different people from different parts of the world, you have to approach them with mutual respect and dignity. I think that was a very important thing that happened to me, that you learn that on the ground--and that you could be self-sufficient without having to rely on your parents, because my father actually was very skeptical that I'd ever do this.

You know who had the greatest confidence in me? My grandmother. His mother gave me money to help on the trip, because I had made the money for the trip working at the Monmouth Racetrack the summer before as a busboy in the restaurant, but I came up a little short. She helped me out.

BC: Talking about music (I am a musician myself), what made you major in history as opposed to going for a music school right out of high school?

WF: Well, I wasn't as good. I wasn't a conservatory-level player. I was a pianist and a trombone player. I still play both, but the problem with trying to go to a music conservatory, if that's what you wanted to do, was that you really had to be very good--and I wasn't.

It has always been a great interest of mine and, when I came to Rutgers, I really took a lot of credits in music, basically a minor, about nineteen credits, but I shifted my major three times. I mean, I started as a journalism major, I went to English, and then, to history. I sort of felt more comfortable not making it a profession.

IB: In your first interview, you talked a lot about band and the subculture surrounding the band. I was wondering if there were any other subcultures that you felt you identified with while you were here at Rutgers.

WF: Not really, I don't think. The band took up a lot of time. It was a pretty cohesive group, I would say, but the interesting thing then (and I think it may be the same now, I just can't verify this) is that the band at Rutgers was not a music major organization. If you had gone to the University of Michigan, for example, the marching band, it was all music majors, but here, it was everybody. We had people in the band who studied all week, showed up at rehearsal on Saturday, then, you never saw them again, because they were studying to get into medical school. There were other people from every part of the University in it.

It was the type of thing where you made connections there with people who were not necessarily [in your circle]. For example, at that time, Rutgers had five different colleges. So, you'd meet people from Livingston, from Douglass, from Cook, University College, things like that. It was a very unifying experience in the sense that everybody was coming together in that, but I would say that was the one sort of association I had.

[Editor's Note: In 2007, Rutgers College, Douglass College, University College, Livingston College and Cook College merged into the School of Arts and Sciences and Cook College became the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.]

BC: In your last interview, the fabled "Soup" was the band director at the time, right?

WF: Soup Walter was the Glee Club Director. [Editor's Note: Francis Austin "Soup" Walter (1910-2000), Professor of Music at Rutgers College, served as the director of the Rutgers Glee Club from 1933 to 1983 and founded the Rutgers University Choir.]

BC: Was he also the band director at the time?

WF: No.

BC: Okay.

WF: Scott Whitener was the band director. [Editor's Note: Dr. Scott Whitener, Rutgers Professor *Emeritus* of Music, became the Rutgers Marching Band Director in 1966.]

BC: Okay. I was in the marching band here for two years. We had the fabled Soup Bowl, where it is the Glee Club against the marching band in football. Towards the end of the interview, you mentioned Soup. Do you have any memories of the band director at the time, anything funny or any memorable things, that might have shaped your time here at Rutgers? [Editor's Note: The first Soup Bowl, a flag football game between the Marching Band and Glee Club, occurred in 1967.]

WF: Oh, there are a lot of things, but I was the coach of the team the first time we beat the Glee Club.

BC: Wow.

WF: Not that that's going to get me in the Hall of Fame, but that happened. [laughter] Anyway, I'll talk about Soup Walter briefly.

BC: All right.

WF: "Soup" Walter was a legend at this school. I will say right now that it is a disgrace that this university has not put him in the Hall of Distinguished Alumni. He's been nominated multiple times and has never been put in. I think it's an absolute outrage.

Here's a guy who ran the Glee Club for over fifty years, who created the Rutgers University Choir in the 1940s, which sang with the greatest orchestras in the world. In fact, on the day after John F. Kennedy was assassinated, the Philadelphia Orchestra was invited to do the *Brahms Requiem* as a memorial concert on television. The Rutgers Choir was the choir. I think it's terrible that a guy like Soup Walter, who did so much for Rutgers, is not there, but, anyway, he was a very interesting fellow. [Editor's Note: President John F. Kennedy was assassinated on November 22, 1963, in Dallas, Texas.]

His teacher founded the Rutgers Music Department, Howard McKinney. McKinney Hall, which is on the corner of Easton and Hamilton, is named after him. Howard McKinney was the type of guy who not only created the Music Department, but he created a whole series of concerts and things like that. If you go back in the *Targums* in the '20s, you see this. It was like a course and students could go. All the greatest artists came to Rutgers. I'm not kidding.

But--Soup was his protégé, and then, Soup took over and helped him out in the '20s and '30s. Then, Soup took over when McKinney stepped back. An interesting anecdote, Howard McKinney was in Vienna when Hitler marched in; interesting, huh?

[Editor's Note: Dr. Howard McKinney, Professor of Music, graduated from Rutgers College in 1913 and joined the school as a faculty member in 1916. In 1919, the Music Department was founded and he was appointed as its first chair, a position he held until the 1950s. He also directed the Rutgers Glee Club and Rutgers Choir. In 1938, Nazi Germany annexed Austria.]

Soup, I took a number of courses with him. I took a course on opera with him, I took a course on symphonic music. The courses were given in the Music House, which you don't know where it is, but I could tell you where it is. If you go down College Avenue and go towards the Student Center (on the right where they have now erected the New Brunswick Theological Seminary, but you go further down) on the corner, there's a building, brown, looks like a house. That was the Music Department office of Rutgers College. They would have the courses in there.

Soup Walter was a character. He was an interesting guy in a lot of ways. Not only did he know a lot of people in the music world, but he was so well-respected as a choral conductor. Leonard Bernstein worked with him. Eugene Ormandy, there's a recording of Carl Orff's *Carmina*

Burana which is still in the catalog, which is still rated as one of the best, if not *the* best, ever done, and the Rutgers Choir sang it.

Anyway, the Glee Club and the band used to rehearse at McKinney Hall. So, I would see him a lot, because one of my jobs, part-time jobs, at Rutgers was, I would be the night monitor for the rehearsal rooms periodically, on like a Sunday or a Thursday. The Glee Club would be rehearsing and I would talk to him and things like that. He really was a fascinating guy. He had an awful lot of stories, which were very interesting.

I mean, one of the things he told us was how he was invited--it was part of the first performance of Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes* in the United States at Tanglewood. Serge Koussevitzky, who started the Boston Symphony work at Tanglewood--well, anyway, you can look it up. It's like 1946 or '47. Well, Soup was in the choir. He had these great imitations of Koussevitzky. It was fascinating; I can't do them. He was very funny.

[Editor's Note: English composer Benjamin Britten's *Peter Grimes,* first staged in 1945, premiered in 1946 at Tanglewood, a music venue in western Massachusetts where the Boston Symphony holds summer concerts. Russian-American composer and conductor Serge Alexandrovich Koussevitzky served as the music director of the Boston Symphony Orchestra from 1924 to 1949.]

Scott Whitener was the head of the band. Scott had been hired. Scott had played in--and he was a Julliard graduate, trumpet--the New Orleans Philharmonic, but he realized that [if] you want to get into the big-time in an orchestral job, it's very difficult. He went to Michigan, and then, he came to Rutgers, after he had been at Xavier, I think, for a year or two.

He really changed the band. Mason Gross is the one who said, "If we're going to go to the 1969 hundredth anniversary of college football," where Rutgers was invited to be the lead band in the parade, he said, "You can't send the current band." This was, like, 1966, '67. "We're going to step it up." Well, he's the guy who got Scott Whitener to come here, and then, Scott was the head of the band. He really made a tremendous quality experience for everybody.

[Editor's Note: Mason Gross (1911-1977) served as President of Rutgers University from 1959 to 1971. The first college football game was played on November 6, 1869, between Rutgers and Princeton. On September 27, 1969, the two teams faced each other again for a centennial game, which aired on ABC.]

MF: What other things did you do that really had an effect on you, besides the band?

WF: Can you be more specific?

MF: Music is one thing you wanted to do and you did that throughout Rutgers--what were some other activities you did?

WF: I initially wanted to be on WRSU. I was accepted as a broadcaster, but I didn't have the time. I did write some music reviews for *The Targum* [the student newspaper of Rutgers

University], because the College Avenue Gym is where they had the concerts at that time. I mean, Vladimir Horowitz performed there. All the big names came. They used to have visiting orchestras that'd come in--and the choir would sing with them, by the way--the New Jersey Symphony, and so forth.

The band honorary fraternity, called Mu Epsilon Alpha at that time, was hired by concerts and lecturers to do the ushering. So, we ushered the concerts. Sometimes, I would write reviews for *The Targum*. Bennet Zurofsky was the arts editor for *The Targum* at that time. Have you interviewed Bennett?

SI: No.

WF: Well, he's a character. You should talk to him. He was a very interesting fellow.

IB: In your first interview, you talked about your time living in Demarest Hall, about how you lived with African Americans and that was a new experience. I was wondering if you ever talked about that with your father, because you had said there were some things you did not share with him about that.

WF: I think my parents were a little concerned about what was going on on the campus, depending upon what took place, like unrest or students protest, things like that. My mother, I don't think had a prejudiced bone in her body, but I think she was dominated by my father. My father definitely had racial prejudice, but I don't think there was any issue about where I lived.

At that time, you couldn't stay at Rutgers unless you had a room on campus through a lottery after a point. You got a room if you were a freshman, if I'm not mistaken, but after that point, there were not enough rooms. I was on campus for the first three years, and then, didn't get a room the fourth year. We shared, my roommate Bob and I, and two other guys, had an apartment in Highland Park.

MF: When you were in school, did you notice anything about racial stereotypes? Did anything stand out to you regarding racism and how did that affect you?

WF: Well, I grew up in a pretty much all-white, suburban town in the Township of Ocean. There might have been two black students in our high school class, maybe. I think it was really an eye-opener for me to come to a place where you were going to encounter different people. Now, having said that, Rutgers today is light years different than the Rutgers College of 1970.

MF: Yes.

WF: And it's all for the better, by the way. The people who were in the hall with us (because we were in the bottom of Demarest and there are only three rooms on each side of the lounge), the people next to us were from Paterson. Larry Phyall is one name, I think. The other fellow's name was Steve Allen They had friends who came over from Livingston and other places. I don't remember any tension or anything like that.

I remember there were two guys from the next room over--one was from Pennsylvania, one was from Long Branch--they got a little testy, I think, because they didn't like the music that was being played or they didn't like some of the people coming over. I think the big takeaway for me was that it was the first time I had been away from home to live.

MF: Yes.

WF: I think you learn a lot about other people and you shed--at least I did--I shed those sort of preconceptions and stereotypes after a period of time.

SI: I am curious, because I am looking at how Paul Robeson's image changed during this period, from the late 1960s to the mid-1970s, as a student on campus, would you have even come across his name? Were they talking about him? Would you learn anything about Paul Robeson?

[Editor's Note: Paul Robeson (1898-1976) was an African-American singer, actor and Civil Rights activist. He was valedictorian of his class at Rutgers in 1919. Due to his support for Stalin, the USSR and the Communist Party during the McCarthy era, Robeson was blacklisted and had his passport revoked from 1950 to 1958, which prevented him from traveling to perform during those years.]

WF: Paul Robeson was invisible.

SI: Okay.

WF: I'll tell you where I saw his picture. In the library at Alexander, before it was changed, before they did a big addition to it, you could go downstairs and they had these big, leather chairs. I liked to go study there and sit. Sometimes, I'd fall asleep, [laughter] but they had these pictures, on sort of large swinging plates, of the graduating classes. I would go like this and go through them. All of a sudden, I saw a black face. There was Robeson, 1919--but, other than that, Paul Robeson was invisible.

Rutgers was ashamed of him, I think--not the people at Rutgers, I think the University was ashamed of him. I mean, Rutgers did nothing to help him, in my view, during the 1950s. I think it was a disgrace what happened to Paul Robeson. In my opinion, he is the greatest graduate of Rutgers of all time. He had the most talent, the most far-reaching impact. It was only really, I think, later in the '70s, after he died, that Rutgers started to sort of step up and say, "Hmm, let's take a look at this again," but I remember, in the early '70s, I mean, you couldn't find anything about him. I couldn't.

IB: How do you feel about Rutgers' recent public commemoration of Robeson and all they have done?

WF: It's about time. I think it's interesting that in the last year, when they had the hundredth anniversary of his graduation, they spent an awful lot of emphasis on it and I think it's long overdue. In the hundredth year of his birth, there was a wonderful exhibit that was here at Zimmerli [an art museum on the College Avenue Campus at Rutgers]. They also had an exhibit

at the New Jersey Historical Society in Newark. They both published books, which I think were very important in shifting the dialogue about Robeson.

Of course, his son, I think, was always an advocate. His son has now passed away, but I think what happened last year (which I think was better than had happened in the past) was, they got into other dimensions of Robeson's life. For too often, Robeson was simply a "communist" in the public eye. I think if you look at Robeson's life (and I think Rutgers did a better job last year), they talked about him as a human rights advocate. They talked about him as an artist. They talked about him as a person who was a precursor of the Civil Rights Movement, a person who opposed colonialism. I think these are important dimensions of him.

One of the interesting articles, if you go back to that book that was published on the hundredth anniversary, Robeson was a book collector--a fascinating article in there about him and the books that he collected, because, when he was on the blacklist, he hardly made any money. He had a big house. He and his wife and his son had a big house in Connecticut. They had to go away from that. He ended up living in Harlem.

I had a friend when I used to teach at Hunterdon Central High School. His name was Bill Sewell. Bill Sewell was an English teacher and he had been at the school for a while when I got hired in '74. We would talk about books and stuff like that. One day, he said, "I never told you this story," but he used to go to Strand Bookstore in New York. It's a huge used bookstore, right. He said he picked up a copy of William Blake's poems--inside the front cover, Paul Robeson's name.

SI: Wow.

WF: It was Robeson's book, but that article in the anthology about Robeson is very interesting, about how he was a bibliophile.

SI: Any other questions about the first interview?

MF: That is it for me.

SI: Okay. We can always jump back to that, but that might be a good segue, because one of the things in-between your first interview and now is, you retired from the high school. Can you tell us a little bit about those last few years of your career at Hunterdon Central?

WF: Sure. I always looked at the whole issue of retirement as not an end, but another stage in the chapters of life, you might say. I reflected on my father. Actually, when my father retired from being a claims adjustor in the Allstate Insurance Company, he never worked again. I looked at that and I said, "I'm not doing that," because I think that sort of indolence is not good. It's not good health-wise. It's not good for your emotional health or your physical health.

I had always kept it in my mind (my wife and I talked about this a lot) that I would leave when I felt good about what I was doing. The famous opera singer Beverly Sills retired when she was fifty-one years old. You know what she said? "I'm going to retire when I'm still good enough to

be acclaimed by the public." She said, "I'm not going to go after that." I always felt that was a great thing.

At the time that I retired, which was at the end of the calendar year of 2010, I still felt very good about what we had achieved and what we were doing. I didn't want to walk out feeling like, "Oh, I can't get up in the morning to show up," because, honestly, I can tell you, in thirty-six-and-a-half years of working at that school, I never got up and said, "I don't want to go to work." Leaving was simply this step towards something else, rather than the end of my involvement with education.

MF: When you worked in Hunterdon, what made you love to work there? You said you never had a day when you would wake up and not want to go. What was that key factor that really drove you?

WF: I'd say there were a couple of factors. First of all--and this is a generic statement about teaching and I tell this to the students I work with here at the Grad. School of Education--you need to like adolescents. If you don't like them, don't get a job teaching middle or high school. I never lost my interest in the students. I felt that the students always would teach you things about how to respond to issues or their lives and how you could help them. I always found that to be a very sort of enlivening and important thing.

The second thing was that I had a good place to work because it promoted intellectual growth. There were very few people at the school who, for lack of a better term, were stagnant intellectually. You looked at those people and you said, "You don't want to be them." The school actually promoted the idea of a culture of professional development and growth. I wouldn't say that was consistent, but I would say, over the long run, that it did happen more often than not.

I mean, I had three sabbatical leaves--that's rare from a public school. They supported that type of thing. They're still giving them out. In fact, I have a former colleague who just went to Northern Ireland to do research for his dissertation on the Civil Rights Movement in Northern Ireland. They gave him a half a year. He had to compete for it, but he got it. They also supported my entire graduate study here. I didn't pay a nickel for going to get my doctorate and my master's degree. They paid the whole freight. That was good, because I think that also supported your idea that when you're a teacher, you always have to be fresh and learn more.

I think the other thing was that they respected and recognized the importance of paying people well. You may not find this believable, but it is true--there were school districts in this state, when I got a job at that school in 1974, that were paying teachers less than six thousand dollars a year. It was only when Governor Kean became Governor of New Jersey [1982 to 1990] that they raised the minimum salary to 18,500 dollars. I made 8,400 dollars a year as a social studies teacher in my first year. That was much better than some districts in the State of New Jersey.

The district had a good reputation for supporting those things. I felt that it was a good place to work. It wasn't like you'd get up in the morning and say, "Boy, I'd better get another job, because this place is really going down the drain," no.

BC: From being a teacher to a supervisor, what were some of the biggest differences? Was there anything that you liked better being a teacher than a supervisor?

WF: Well, I think we have to define terms, too, because, today, if you are a middle-level administrator in a public school, more often than not, you will not teach any more classes. To my view, that is a bad thing, because I insisted that I would continue to teach when I was a supervisor. Many of my colleagues did not.

I always felt the critical factor was that if I'm going to tell a colleague and say, "Here, this method, you might want to try this," if I couldn't exemplify that, then, they're not really going to see that what I'm doing and telling them to do or advising them to do has much merit. I have to sort of be there and do it. I always told them, "I won't ask you to do anything I wouldn't do."

So--when you moved into middle administration, you were no longer in the union, for one thing. It was a separate association then, principals and supervisors. I still work with them, but that was a separate bargaining unit. The other part of it was that the most difficult thing (or the biggest challenge) was that you were no longer on the same level as them. You were now writing their evaluations. You were now writing their observations of classroom teaching. You were now overseeing the budgets and all this stuff.

My feeling was that I wasn't going to rehash the past. In fact, you've interviewed my former boss, George Gazonas. George retired in August 1987. I made my mind up that I wasn't going to talk about what happened before. It was, "We're moving ahead and we'll forge a direction together." I think that was the thing that I had to decide; I think it was the right decision.

BC: Did any of your colleagues in the school, say, someone who was a math teacher, got bumped up to math supervisor, follow the same philosophy, where they would still continue to teach a course?

WF: Some of them did, some of them didn't. I really didn't explore it with them. Some of them, I think it would be very difficult because they had more than one department. I mean, when you have thirty or forty people to supervise, it's more difficult. Still, I did it and I had twenty-five, twenty-six people. Now, I wouldn't teach all year. I might teach one course, but, still, I mean, the contact with the students, you have to understand the challenges those students are facing. If you're distant from that, I think it's harder.

I'll never forget this; this is an interesting story. I had a colleague (we hired a person, she's still at the high school) who worked at another place in Monmouth County. She didn't like that school and she applied for the job and we hired her. Then, the first year she was there, (at Central) she came in and she had some difficulties with parents. We talked about one of the issues and she said, "Well, this parent doesn't like the fact that I told the student, 'Mrs. Jones,'" I'm making the name up, "'Your son is a 'B' student,'" and he was in an honors class.

I said, "Do you understand how that comes across when you say that this student is a 'B' student?" She said, "What do you mean?" I said, "You have now categorized the student. The

fact that the student has a 'B' now doesn't mean the student will always have a 'B.'" She sort of looked at me and I said, "The problem is that you have now given the parent the impression that you have categorized the student and that is the way the student will stay." She understood.

The reason I'm bringing this story up is that there is no way of knowing the potential of every student based on one marking period or one thing they've done. There was a teacher--we used to have a workroom at the high school. It was divided into different locations. There was a freshman faculty. I was in the freshman house for the first four years. This guy was an interesting guy. His name was Leo Karpinich. He was an immigrant from the Ukraine. His family had been displaced and deported by the Germans to Germany as forced labor during World War II. He ended up coming to the United States and he taught German.

I remember, some people would go on and on about, "Well, these students…" or this, that and the other thing. Leo is there and I'm a new teacher. He says, "Bill, I'm going to tell you something. You have no way of knowing how a fourteen-year-old is going to be when they're twenty-five or thirty. One might be a bank president, but maybe they got five detentions when they're fourteen years old." [laughter] He said, "Don't listen to that stuff." He was absolutely right. I think you have to understand and empathize with the student and recognize how much you don't know.

MF: I want to bounce off that. You were talking about how you had your certain practices in certain positions that you went on to be in--did you see any practices that you particularly did not like from your colleagues?

WF: I would say that the teachers who were not very effective, (A) engaged in the type of behavior I just talked about, sort of categorizing or stereotyping at times. A second thing is, I think they didn't grow professionally. They were unwilling to take criticism or they were unwilling to change because they "knew the answer," you might say. And there were some, I think, that just had all the best of intentions, but they--teaching is a stressful job. It's a six-day a week job. If people don't want to do the work, then, maybe they just realize that it's not for them and they start to cut corners.

That's why I tell students at the GSE [Graduate School of Education], I say, "Listen, if you want to do this job, you've got to be prepared to do a lot of work outside the building. You've got to be prepared to work on Saturday or Sunday, because I don't see how you can do it well otherwise. If you think you're going to show up, grade every paper in the building, go home and there's not going to be any relationship between what goes on at home or what goes on in school, I think you're misleading yourself."

I'll tell you the other thing that's different now, the twenty-four-hour contact, because the Internet has made the whole idea of constantly being contacted almost a given.

BC: Yes.

WF: One thing I refused to do--I refused to do this when the Internet became involved, when the schools got involved and I still do it today--I will not (I shouldn't say not today, because it's

different when you teach in a university), but I refused to read my school email at home. I simply refused. You know why?--because the problem is going to be there tomorrow.

If it's an emergency, it's a whole different ballgame, but, if some parent wants to know, "Did Joe or Jane get an 'A' on the test?" they can know that tomorrow, because if I don't establish a barrier, in a sense, between life at home and life at school, it can be consuming. I try to reinforce this with the students, that there has to be a balance.

Shaun, I'm sure you see this with your wife. She works as a teacher. There has to be a balance. If you don't have it, you can be consumed by it.

SI: Going off what you said about the teacher kind of labeling a student a certain way, part of that can also be systemic, though, in tracking and things like that. That is nationwide, but did you see those practices having a particular profound effect in any way at your school over the years?

WF: I would say that the intensity of concern about moving students into advanced placement became much more an issue in my last few years at the school. I did not support it, I did not like it. In fact, we were given a direct order that we had to create an AP United States history class by the superintendent. This was in the early 2000s. We already had an honors class, but that wasn't good enough--they had to be AP.

Now, if you go to the school, I'm sure you could find that they have every AP course in social studies, but, to me, it has become very different than what Advanced Placement originally was, which was to provide [for] students who wanted to get college credit or the opportunity to get college credit. Now, I believe, it has become a pathway to a résumé builder so that they can get into certain schools. The number of AP classes you have on your transcript becomes the mark, not necessarily whether the AP course is a better-quality course than anything else.

We had a guy who was a guidance director they brought in from West Windsor during the period (the last ten years I was there). He used to talk about how we have to have more APs because University of Virginia won't even look at your application unless you have five AP classes. I think that misses the mark about what public education should be. My position (and I think it's a minority position now) is that there should be a quality education focused on developing thoughtful citizens that takes place before you exit the secondary school.

We have no guarantee that people are going to go to college. We have no guarantee they're going to go and engage in any type of learning about what it means to be a citizen after that. If we don't do it before they leave high school, I don't think it's going to get done very well. That's my position. I don't think that's a majority position, unfortunately.

SI: A lot of the literature on tracking focuses on its impact on reproducing class and racial prejudice. Looking back now, could you see any of those factors in effect?

WF: Well, Hunterdon Central was not a very diverse community. It was really a pretty much all-white community, but it was class diversity. When I started at the school, we had two full-

time teachers of agriculture. It was both rural and suburban. Over the years, it became entirely suburban. They got rid of industrial arts, they got rid of agriculture and you had pretty much a college entrance focus.

The issue of racial diversity was not there. The last ten years I was at the school, we got more and more diversity, but, still, it was small. The greatest amount of diversity, the biggest challenges were coming from limited English students who were coming to the community, Latinos primarily, but not only, Vietnamese also. The problem you faced, I think, was making sure that those students did not get placed only in the lowest level. I don't know how they're doing now with that, but we worked hard to develop programs so that the transitions would be more effective.

It is a difficult task, because some of the students who would come in who are recent immigrants hadn't been in school for two years and they had absolutely no cultural context for, like, learning United States history. They didn't know where Mississippi was, and it's not their fault. They just didn't have that background. You had to devise a program that would actually provide that, but also try to advance them through the cognitive development of learning.

Then, I think the other thing that was happening in terms of this division was that with the intensity of creating this AP [curriculum], then, you start to see, well, there's the AP group, and then, there's the others. Then, you've got students who really are challenged with reading or other places. My feeling was, this overemphasis on AP exacerbated some of the divisions.

IB: Do you think schools' focus on college prep is a detriment to the public education system?

WF: I don't think it's a detriment in terms of providing students with the opportunity to advance to another level of education, but I do think that an overemphasis on sort of status-seeking to get into elite schools distorts not only the choice of courses they can take, but also the purpose. There's not enough discussion of citizenship education--and I don't mean just in social studies, I mean across the board in public schools--because a citizen is not only developed in the history class. That's one of the issues I think is under the radar; they're not talking about that too much.

The other thing is that when I came here to teach at the GSE part-time, one of the things you also find out is that by teaching students who have been through the system (now that are college graduate students), yes, you find interesting stories from them about what they're encountering and how they got to where they are. I think there's an enormously sort of fragmented landscape of higher education in this country. You see people who've come from, for example, going to community college, then to Rutgers. Then, you've got people who got into Rutgers and maybe get into the Honors College. Then, you've got people who went to other schools and came here for their graduate degree.

It would be interesting to actually study their perceptions of their own post or pre-collegiate experience to see how that all worked out, but I'm not against that. I'm saying that I think we don't have enough emphasis on what it means to be a human being, sort of a broader, more developed human being. I think that is part of the problem we face, because we have to redefine, in my view, the purpose of the, for lack of a better term, secondary education.

BC: As an administrator at Hunterdon Central, did you try to bring up this idea of empowering students to be better citizens? Were you met by pushback from higher administration?

WF: Well, there are two issues about that. Number one is that schools are still very traditional in how they organize themselves. I think this is another big problem or challenge that this school has faced, public education faced. We're still organized by disciplinary boundaries. Most schools have a social studies department, an English department, a science department, a math department, and the tendency to have territorial control is very strong.

If I'd say, for example, at a meeting, "Why don't we focus on having students do service learning?" then, somebody might say, "Well, that's going to take time away from the math department," and, "Well, we can't do that because of this…" Then, athletics would say, "Now, wait a minute, we have to have a schedule for the buses." I'm not saying everybody complained, but the point would be that we're not talking about the child, we're talking about territory.

When I talk to the students at Rutgers here in the class, I say, "You need to put it in the perspective of the child, not because you think it's better to teach medieval history, but how is it going to benefit the student? What's the students' perspective? What's the benefit to them?" I don't think that conversation happens that much. I think it should happen a lot more. I think that shift would be good.

The other thing is that we still do things following what I would consider to be almost obsolete preconceptions. Why do we have 180 days of school? Why don't we go all year round? Why are we starting high school at seven-thirty in the morning when everybody knows, the research says, that teenagers learn much better if they start at nine o'clock? There are these barriers, these sort of traditional ways of thinking.

I can tell you, one of the things where I used to work, "Oh, we can't change that starting time of school." You know why? because we have a bus agreement with the elementary schools and they have to work with the buses at a certain time. "When would the athletes practice?" Sorry, I don't think that's a reasonable objection. I think it's better to have the students learn better, rather than worry about whether the athletes are going to start practicing at seven in the morning or at three-thirty in the afternoon--but I didn't have the majority, see. [laughter] The parents also would object.

SI: Again, we can come back, but, since you have been talking a little bit about your teaching at the GSE, can you tell us how that came to be and how that started?

WF: Sure. When I was planning to retire, I gave the superintendent six months' notice that I was retiring, because I thought it was only fair that they would have a full transition. What happened was that I wrote some letters to people I knew in the field, because I had taught at the GSE, on and off, a few classes over my period when I was still teaching at Central.

I wrote to Dr. [Benjamin] Justice, who is the head of the Educational Theory and Policy [Department]. At that time, he wasn't the chair, but he was running the Social Studies

Certification Program. I also wrote to Dave Pierfy, who was the person overseeing the social studies program at Rider University. I said, "I'm going to be retiring. If you have an opportunity, if we could talk about some options, if you think you need [me or have some] opportunities for me to teach, I'd love to do it," and so forth.

The first thing that came up was that when I retired at the end of December, I was contacted by Rider to teach a class, an interesting class for career change candidates. These people were in other careers and wanted to become teachers. They were not [just] social studies, they were all across the board--science, business, mathematics, elementary education. A woman named Dr. Kathleen Pierce hired me at Rider to do that and I taught that for a semester.

Then, I taught the "Social Studies Methods" class for Dave's program at Rider in the fall of that year, but Dr. Justice and I met and he invited me to start teaching at Rutgers in 2012, spring. That was when I came here and I haven't gone back to Rider, because I think the conditions--and, in all honesty, the students--at Rutgers are much better.

Since that time, I've been teaching not every semester, but a good number of them. In fact, I just got promoted to part-time lecturer II, because I had to have twelve semesters already completed and that was the minimum requirement. I got the promotion at the end of December and I just started with the higher salary in January, but this is my thirteenth semester.

SI: For the record, what classes do you teach?

WF: I've taught a variety of classes. The nice thing about Rutgers is that they've let me develop two classes on my own. I teach two electives. One is in global education and the other one is on human rights and education. I also teach a class right now called "Analysis of Social Studies Curriculum," which is the last course in the sequence for the Social Studies Certification Program, the master's program. I have also taught "Materials and Methods" and the Student Internship Seminar and, once, I taught the summer workshop course, which helps them prepare for their student teaching.

MF: Teaching in high school, and then, teaching here, what differences do you see in teaching? What do you see differently in teaching styles? What are some things that are changing from this school and that school?

WF: Well, at Rutgers, there's an awful lot that's electronic. You meet once a week, so, I mean, three hours. If you have a class that meets every week, a lot of work gets done in-between, whereas in the high school, you're meeting every day, or if you're on a rotating block--we had block scheduling for the last fifteen years I was at the school. We had everyday block scheduling. I would teach--I had mentioned before I taught "Classical World"--I would meet that every day for eighty minutes, for forty-five days. Then, it was done, but then, I would teach another class or so forth.

Here, you have three hours a week and, in-between that, the students are doing reading and doing assignments, and so forth. I've also taught classes here where I have a hybrid class, where I teach face-to-face, like, eight or nine times and they have online four or five times. The

difference is that it's all much more independent. You expect that students who are older and have been though an undergraduate program are able to manage their time. That is not always true, by the way.

The second thing is that there's an expectation that I don't have to remind them (although that's not always true either) about getting things done, because things intervene--a person has a family tragedy. So, this is the same as before. Really, you have to be accountable to or you have to understand the challenges people face. The third thing, though, is that, here, they're going to be moving towards a completion of a program that is going to prepare them for work.

Right now, the students I have are getting ready to go into the job market. So, part of my job is to try to help them get ready to go into the labor market, whereas back in the high school, at least at the end of my career there, very few of those students were going to go out and get a job. They were already working--they're working part-time--but they're not necessarily going to go and work full-time. They might go to community college or go to four-year college, but these people here are going to go to work. So, part of my job is to help them get ready for that.

Now, in the elective courses I teach, I get all different people. So, I might have a doctoral student, I might have undergraduates, I might have people in different programs. There, the job piece may be part of it, too, but not as intensely as the one that is actually in a licensing program. I think that's part [of it], and there's an awful lot of responsibility, in my view, on the professor to stay in contact with people. I know that some people have said that has not been their experience, but I make it a point.

After every class, I write a follow-up email to the whole class, because you have people who are absent, "Here's what we did. Here's where we're headed." I respond to every email within twenty-four hours, because I feel they took the time to write to me, I'm not going to blow it off. You have to maintain a relationship with a person. If you don't, then, what do you expect is going to happen? They're not going to understand you or they're not going to be attentive to you.

MF: Do you have a preference between high school and college? Do you like one better?

WF: I'm just at a different stage in my life. I think to go into teaching in public school today at my age would be very challenging for me. I don't get up at five-thirty anymore. [laughter]

MF: Yes, that is probably a benefit.

WF: That's a good thing. When I was younger, I didn't have a problem with that, but now, I would. That's not where I'm at in my life. There are people I know who have gone back to teach after retirement and they like it, but I don't think they're going to teach for twenty years.

That's an interesting issue, by the way, because I think you may see this, too, in your own experience, and I don't know, Shaun, if you've seen this with your wife, but I think there are fewer people willing to do the job that I did for as long as I was doing it anymore. I think there's more mobility, more people going into teaching and leaving, but very few people, in comparison, who are going to stay thirty years in the same district.

I always felt that was a plus of the district, by the way, where I worked, that they encouraged people to stay. They'd build a relationship and build a community. I think that's the only way you can really build a good program, too. You can't have this sort of revolving door of people coming in and out all the time. Then, you have to train them and you have to socialize them, and then, they have to understand the community. Well, if they're leaving every three years, then, how is that going to happen?

MF: Why do you think it is like that? Why do you think it has that revolving door now?

WF: Oh, I think there's a bunch of reasons. It wouldn't be fair to see if I'm an expert on that, but I can give you just two inferences. One is that, I think, in some districts, salary has not maintained what it should. The reason I say that is because, if you look at a public school in New Jersey, anywhere from twenty to thirty thousand dollars a year is being paid for health benefits under a collective bargaining agreement. The teachers now are paying, in most districts, thirty-five percent of that premium. They may find that they have other opportunities, economically, that are better.

The second thing is that I think the job has become more bureaucratic and has become more challenging, in a sense, with the twenty-four-hour contact piece. I think some people just get tired and they find out it's not for them. I'm all in favor of that. If you don't like it and you find it's not for you, then, move on, but it's going to be a challenge to continue to bring talented people in if the conditions of labor don't stay good.

I was talking to a student last night and this person was saying that he was very disenchanted in his student teaching with one of the aspects, that people would come up to say, "You want to go into this job? Why do you want to go into this job? I have fifteen years left--I can't wait to get out." It's very disenchanting for a person who's just entering the field. My job is to tell them, "Look, that's not the rule. That's the exception in many places," but, in some schools, it's unfortunately too much the rule.

SI: I see some of the courses that you taught, like "Human Rights" and "Global Education," are in relatively emerging fields. One, how do you see those playing into a new look at social studies and, two, do your students report that they are able to implement some of this stuff, given how strict some curricula can be?

WF: I think teachers have a lot more leeway than they think they do.

SI: Okay.

WF: We're not the same type of educational system as they have in some other societies where it's all top-down--the ministry of education issues an edict and everybody does it. In the United States, it is much more decentralized. I think it really depends a lot on the nature of the school culture and the prior education, but, also, the continuing education (of teachers). I have had people, like in the human rights class, who have gone into teaching in public schools and they're very dedicated to incorporating human rights issues and integrating it into the classroom.

I'm not convinced that the United States right now is very much--the federal government certainly is not--interested in human rights education, nor are they interested in global education. I think that's a fair statement for the Trump Administration. I think that you have to put that aside and just decide that it's important and do it.

BC: Between working at the Graduate School of Education and Rider, I know you mentioned that the students are different at both universities, what about from the administrative side? What were the differences? Granted, it is a big time period difference, but what were some differences that you noticed between working at the Graduate School of Education now and at Rider?

WF: Well, Rider is a much smaller school and Rider was very good to me, don't get me wrong. They treated me very well. Interesting thing is, both Rutgers and Rider are unionized. This is something that I think you may want to talk about, this whole issue of what's going on with the unionization of higher education.

I was shocked, when I came into the field, after I had finished at Hunterdon Central, to find out, by reading these statistics from the American Association of University Professors, that, today, less than thirty-five percent of all faculty in the United States are on tenure-line contracts. That's the opposite of what it was when I came to Rutgers in the '70s. You have many more people who are on non-permanent contracts or temporary contracts and the workforce in higher education is now overwhelmingly that.

When I got to Rider, one of the things I got put in my mailbox was, "Do you want to join the AAUP?" I said, "Yes," because who is going to advocate for you otherwise? They had a strong union there. When I came to Rutgers, I also got more involved in the union, because I became the treasurer of the part-time lecturers' union here, but, at Rutgers, there's more than one union. There's a full-time union, a union for the non-tenure track faculty, there's a graduate student's group and there's also the part-time lecturers. Rider is just a smaller-scale version of that in a sense, yes. As I understand it, Rider does not have, like, three separations. They've got one union and, if you work part-time, you're still in the same union with the full-time faculty.

SI: Let me pause for one second.

[TAPE PAUSED]

SI: We were talking about the union. Particularly in the last year or two, there has been a lot of activity with the part-time lecturers' union. Leading up to that, can you tell us a little bit about your involvement there? You mentioned you became the treasurer, but did you start right away?

WF: Well, I joined right away when I came in, because they simply would transfer my membership from Rider to Rutgers. You pay dues out of your salary; it's a small amount. What happened was that I went over to the union office, because I've done a lot of work in negotiations. As a part-time job when I left Hunterdon Central, the New Jersey Principals and

Supervisors Association offered me the position of becoming a field representative. I had been on the negotiating team for our administrative contract for eight contracts at Hunterdon Central.

I had learned a lot through the work of that, and with a guy named Sam Vukcevich, who was a wonderful mentor. He was a longtime principal and was a field representative for PSA. He worked with our unit. He said, "You might want to think about that." So, Wayne Oppito, who is the lead attorney at PSA, which is located in Monroe Township, invited me to become a field rep. I said, "Oh, I'd enjoy that." Since I retired, I've been doing that, since about 2013. Right now, for example, I have three assignments, two negotiations assignments and one as an advocate for a person in another district who is having some challenges with the lead administrator, the superintendent.

Keeping that in mind, about four years ago, I went over to the union office and I said, "If you're going to be negotiating, I might be able to offer some insight, because I've done a lot of it." They were interested, but, pretty much, the union at Rutgers, part-time lecturers' union, had already been developing their ideas for negotiations, but they said, "You can join the team, fine."

What happened was that during that first time, or that first year I was involved, a member of the board of the part-time lecturers' union resigned. They needed somebody to fill in, so, they asked me. I did it. Then, in 2017, the summer, I ran for the treasurer post and I was elected. I served a two-year term from September of 2017 to August of 2019, and then, this last year, I was on the ballot again and I won. Nobody ran against me, actually. I served from September 1st to the middle of November when I resigned.

SI: Why did you resign?

WF: That's an interesting story.

SI: Okay.

WF: I resigned because I felt that the direction of the newly constituted majority on the board of the part-time lecturers' union was going in a direction I couldn't support. There was, unfortunately, an enormous amount of conflict that emerged and it really was due to the disagreements about the contract settlement. So, the people who were in the leadership of the union--I mean the elected leadership--the president, the vice-president, myself (the treasurer) and the secretary, we were part of the negotiating team.

What happened was that last year, as you probably know, there was an awful lot of strife on the campus about negotiations. You had the full-time, you had the graduate students, you had the non-tenured faculty unit, and then, us. The full-time faculty kept saying, "We're not going to settle until everybody's got a contract." Well, that didn't happen--they settled. Then, we were sort of left holding the bag, but the guy who was our negotiator--is a professional, Steve Weissman--did a terrific job and we finally got a contract.

The contract had some very good elements in it. One was that it created a path for promotion, to part-time lecturer II or III. It increased, by an enormous amount of money, the money for

professional development. It provided more security in terms of providing in the contract language for people who had taught for a long period of time. This was very positive.

Unfortunately, there were a number of people in the union board--and outside, in the rank-and-file, you might say--who disagreed with this. They decided to run their own anti-ratification campaign. Well, the contract was ratified overwhelmingly. Like over seventy percent of the people in the union said, "We like the contract."

However, this group decided to run a slate to take over the executive board. What happened was that, I think, there were thirteen people on the board, the four officers, and then, nine or seven people on the board. There's a vice-president at Camden and a vice-president at Newark--they're officers, too.

To make a long story short, what happened was that our slate got six of those thirteen seats, the other people got seven. Well, from the first time we had a meeting in September, it was very contentious. It became obvious to me over three meetings with that board that they were not interested in democracy; they were interested in pushing their agenda.

I'll give you an example. We had the vice-president at Newark, Beth Adubato, who had to resign for personal reasons. Okay, she had been in our slate. She resigned. At the meeting, how do you fill that slot? The bylaws don't say--it's silent on this. Like, for the president, if the president leaves, there's a succession--the vice-president takes over, okay. Then, you have a process. There was no process.

At the meeting, I suggested, "Why don't we let the membership decide? Have a ballot, go out to the membership. You can do it electronically." They didn't want to do that. They wanted to appoint one of their own people. They appointed one of their people as vice-president in Newark without any vote from the membership. Then, to fill her slot who had been on the board, they appointed someone from their slate who had lost. I'm sitting there, I'm saying, "This is anti-democratic. What is going on here?"

Then, the other thing was, they wanted to reduce compensation for people who were doing work. We were getting paid forty-five dollars an hour, which is not an unreasonable amount of money for the work you're doing. I'm not talking about a salary. I'm talking about, if I had a project--for example, if I'm working on negotiations and they asked me to do data analysis--they'd pay me forty-five dollars an hour. As treasurer, you have work to do. I had to prepare reports. Okay, forty-five dollars--this is not going to make me rich. This is a small amount of money.

Well, they didn't like that either. They said, "We're going to reduce that--everybody to twenty-five dollars an hour." I said, "To me, the handwriting is on the wall here. They're not interested in maintaining professional ways. They wanted to just use it for other things." Well, I just didn't feel comfortable with that.

That's why I said in November (and I consulted with the other officers), I said, "I'm sorry, I really can't [continue]. My principles are at stake here. I can't support this and continue." I

worked it out that I resigned in the middle of November. I helped the next treasurer, who was one of the people who wanted to make all these changes. I helped him, and then, I was finished.

SI: Can you kind of summarize what the opposition was pushing for?

WF: Yes, they didn't want the promotions.

SI: Yes.

WF: They wanted all the money to go more to the [raises]. They wanted more than a three-percent raise to go to everybody, but Rutgers wasn't going to do that. When you get in negotiations, and I don't know how many of you have ever been involved in collective bargaining, but, if you have, you realize that if you don't understand what the other side's priorities are, you're never going to get anywhere. You have to realize that, after a point, you have to make a deal.

Well, we made some real gains, but Rutgers wasn't going to give more than three percent. You took that, you got your gains and you do better the next time. Well, they didn't like that. I think they felt--some of them felt--that the president and the vice-president were getting paid too much. I think people don't understand how much work it is to be a vice-president and a president of a union, with no staff officer devoted to that particular group. You are now fielding hundreds of phone calls from union members about grievances and about other issues. You're working with the University and try to solve issues. This takes time.

What did they do? After I left, I was talking to the vice-president. He said they reduced the pay of the vice-president and the president by two-thirds. We're not talking about a hundred thousand dollars a year. We're talking about people getting paid 2,700 dollars a month, and they're taking away two-thirds of that.

Well, people have to make decisions then, "How am I going to continue to do this if I can't get paid to do the work?" I've done a lot of work as a volunteer. I continue to do work as a volunteer, but there's some things you need to get paid for. I just felt it was a bad signal.

SI: How did the part-time union work with the other two unions? Are there any examples of working or not working together?

WF: Yes, there's some shared staff. The AAUP office has a group of professionals there to deal with grievances and other things. That was shared, but the other issue there was that there's been some unresolved issues about how the part-time lecturers' union and the full-time union share responsibilities and things like that. I don't know all the details about that, but I'd say that the full-time union, last year, had been working towards the idea of having a job action, and I mean a strike. I thought that was ludicrous.

I'll tell you why. First of all, how many professors on this campus are going to stop doing their work because they didn't get a raise? They're just going to stop doing services? I don't think that many are going to do it and I think Rutgers knows it. It's exacerbated with people in the part-

time lecturers' union because most people aren't here all the time anyway. They teach online, they teach, like me, one day a week. You are saying that you want to build a group of people that are going to cease all their services? Rutgers is under no obligation to keep them.

One of the things I felt is that once they sort of got down to it, "Are we going to have a strike or not?" I had a guy come into my class who was actually doing graduate work at the Grad School of Ed, who was very much in favor of this sort of hardline on the strike. He was coming to observe my class for another purpose, for his dissertation study.

I had made a point in the class one night of saying, "Look, I understand," to the students, "there's a lot of us concerned about a strike." I said, "I will tell you now, I'm going to continue to teach," because these students need to finish. They don't finish, they don't get a license. I'm sorry, I'm going to commit to that. Well, he was, like, taken aback. I said, "I'm sorry, we've had that conversation and I'm continuing to teach." If you can't get sixty, seventy percent of people to do a job action, don't even threaten it, don't even threaten it.

The people at Rutgers who could really make a job action work are not the professors. It's the dining service workers, it's the custodians, it's the secretaries, it's the bus drivers. Can you imagine Rutgers functioning if all the buses stopped? If you don't have them onboard, you're not going to have an effective job action, I'm sorry.

See, we went on strike one day when I was at Hunterdon Central, back in the '70s, one day. I think it was overblown. They thought they were going to have this great success. They went out on strike, the board had a hard line--there was still no contract. You can do other things, but, by and large, negotiations is a process of persuasion and compromise. It's not throwing Molotov cocktails.

SI: I think one of the things that came out of the recent publicity was just the role of PTLs and how it has changed, how much of the actual teaching work is done by PTLs, as you mentioned earlier. I would imagine that was one of the bargaining tools.

WF: I think Rutgers has a better understanding now of the roles that part-time lecturers play. We're teaching thirty percent of the classes, as an estimate. You've got three thousand of us across Camden, New Brunswick and Newark. I think that that was one of the results of the negotiations process, but it is an educational process. I used to tell people this when I worked with them in the school districts. I said, "You can't talk to the board of education only when you want their money. [laughter] You have to educate them about what you do, because boards of education change and the people who were at the last table aren't necessarily the people that are going to be there again. They may not know what you do."

Part of this job is to educate the Rutgers administration and the community about what part-time lecturers actually do. I'm not convinced that process is going to go forward that much, because I think the current gang (and this is just my impression) is really not that interested in trying to convince the Rutgers administration and the community at large about this.

I remember, we had a meeting last year--this was, like, a big meeting of the action committee for the full-time and for the part-time and others. I made a suggestion at that meeting. I said, "What are we doing to educate the public?" went, phew, way over their head.

Nobody even talked about it, but you know what? Why aren't we talking to the Legislature? Why aren't we doing that? There are an enormous number of part-time faculty all across New Jersey, not just at Rutgers. Community colleges, vast numbers of people are part-time. They're not getting well paid.

I can tell you right now, Rutgers is very well paid in comparison to many other places. I was offered a job at Columbia Teacher's College about seven or eight years ago. I would've had to take a fifteen-hundred-dollar pay cut to teach a class at Columbia Teacher's College--would've been interesting, but, in addition to the fact it would've taken me two hours to drive in and two hours to drive back, it would probably end up being an economic loss for me; sorry, not doing it.

SI: Yes.

WF: The union is very important, but I believe that the union must do more than talk about salary and benefits.

MF: What direction do you see the union heading in for the future?

WF: I couldn't really say. I don't want to speculate, only because I'm not at the meetings.

MF: Okay.

WF: I can only tell you what my impression was from the last time I was there and what I hear from some other colleagues who have "departed the scene," let's put it that way, but my feeling is that you get more by being persuasive and by working with people than by yelling at them or by being sort of in a constant state of contention.

That doesn't mean that Rutgers is right, by the way, on a lot of issues--don't get me wrong. Rutgers should be offering health benefits to part-time lecturers who teach fifty percent or more. They don't. Some of the Big Ten schools do; Michigan does, Maryland does. People need health benefits. I think that's something they should change, but, as part of the negotiated settlement, there was an agreement that the unions of Rutgers will be working with the state. I think that's where the leverage may be, with the state legislature, not with just the negotiations with the Rutgers administration. [Editor's Note: Rutgers University and the University of Maryland joined the Big Ten Athletic Conference in 2014.]

IB: Do you see yourself running for a position again in the future?

WF: Nope, nope. I'm moving on to other things. I'm trying to finish my book on Clifford Case, so, that's job number one, in addition to teaching right now. My goal right now is to finish that book by the end of the calendar year. I'm not even teaching at the GSE in the fall. I already asked Dr. Justice. I'm just going to hold off because I want to finish it.

[Editor's Note: Clifford Case (1904-1982), a Rutgers College Class of 1925 graduate, served in the House of Representatives from 1945 to 1953 and represented New Jersey in the United States Senate from 1955 to 1979.]

MF: How do you go about writing? I have a friend who likes to write and she wants to write a book, but one issue she always has is just sitting down and doing it. What is your method?

WF: It's hard. My best advice I got from a former member of my dissertation committee, Ron Hyman, who was a professor at the GSE, said, "Bill, I don't care if you write a sentence, do it. Get out of the library. You're not going to get anything done sitting in the library. You've got to sit down [and write]." At that time (and people don't understand this now or they weren't there when I did this), I handwrote my dissertation and handed it to a typist. You actually had to write it. Then, I handed it to the typist, she typed it. There was no computer at that point that I could use to do that.

Today, I sit at the computer and I open the chapter up. I sit and I look at it and I say, "Okay, what can I add to this now?" I go back and I modify something, but I try to do, when I'm sitting there, at least a paragraph or two paragraphs, a page, to move, to advance the momentum, because momentum is critical, I'll tell you right now. I've had periods with this book where I've stopped, and then, I picked it up. Now, I'm trying to just sustain the momentum to finish the last three chapters or four chapters and get it done.

I'm working on the chapter on Vietnam right now, which is daunting in some ways, because you have to decide what you want to talk about. There's far more information than ever can be used. In fact, Robert Caro, who's writing this enormous biography of Lyndon Johnson--I think the last book is coming out now--in an interview, he said, "I might use ten percent of my sources."

[Editor's Note: Journalist and biographer Robert Caro has published four volumes of a five-volume biography of President Lyndon Johnson titled *The Years of Lyndon Johnson*. The first volume was published in 1982. As of 2021, he is working on the fifth volume.]

I've got all these sources on Case and what he did in the Senate. I just got nineteen hundred pages from the Frank Church Archives at Boise State. They sent me it all digitally and it was all about the fact that Case and Frank Church opposed the continuation of the Vietnam War and proposed amendments to cut off the funding. Well, Church, his archives, has all this stuff. So, I had to get it. Well, now, I've got to go through it. [Editor's Note: Frank Church (1924-1984) represented Idaho in the United States Senate from 1957 to 1981.]

Part of it is deciding what you can use and what you can't. That's part of the job and it's also, I think, deciding how to say it, but, if you don't try to do something every day, then, I think, you just sort of lose momentum and you can lose interest.

SI: I am pretty sure we talked about this in the first interview, but I think it would be good to reiterate it here. What interested you about Case and how did you get into this book project?

WF: Well, ironically, something that Case advocated has just become law. They've just made lynching a federal crime. Clifford Case was the last person, before this effort that just passed, in the Congress to propose legislation to make lynching a federal crime. This was in 1948. It had been proposed periodically before that and never had passed. The Southern segregationist bloc in the Democratic Party particularly was adamantly opposed to it.

[Editor's Note: An anti-lynching bill has never been passed by the federal government. In 2020, the Emmett Till Antilynching Act passed the House of Representatives 410-4. In the Senate, the bill was stalled by Senator Rand Paul and has not been put up for vote as of April 2021.]

I found this in a footnote in a book on lynching. Then, I just decided, "Well, what's this? Clifford Case from New Jersey." I knew he was from Rutgers, but, then, I found out Rutgers has his papers. Three hundred boxes of his papers were at Rutgers because he donated them. Then, I got interested in him as a human being and as a man. He was in the band, by the way, and the Glee Club. He married his wife, who was a Douglass graduate; they met here. He's just an interesting person for another reason--he was a good human being.

I interviewed Tom Kean, Governor Kean. One of the first things he said, "Clifford Case," who was his mentor, by the way, "was just a very decent human being." Every single person I've spoken to about Case, who worked for him, reiterated this. One guy named Ed Levine, who worked for the Intelligence Committee as an aide, told me in an interview this August, he said, "I've worked for other people in the Senate. I liked some of them--others, not so much--but there's only one person whose photograph is on my wall in my home study, Clifford Case."

Case was involved in a lot of issues and things that are very close to me, like human rights. He was a big supporter of Civil Rights, he was a big supporter of expanding Medicare, big supporter of immigration reform. He was just a person who believed in ethical behavior. He proposed, starting in 1956 or '57, that all members of Congress publish their finances. He did it. That didn't become law until the 1970s, but he kept reintroducing that, session after session after session. It finally got done. [Editor's Note: The Ethics in Government Act of 1978 requires that public officials disclose their employment history and finances.]

I think you learn a lot about what it means to be persistent when you follow someone like this. He was also a person, I think, who was deeply influenced by his Rutgers education. His father went to Rutgers and was a minister. This idea of the social gospel, I think, was very powerful for his father. His father was very involved with social welfare causes.

His father died when Case was sixteen years old, but I think he influenced him, and I think the fact that he came from Rutgers and Case went to Rutgers and saw that there was sort of a continuity there. Plus, Case's uncle went to Rutgers. His name is Clarence Case, served on the New Jersey Supreme Court. There was a strong connection, but it was also, I think, something that was sort of a values-based connection.

[Editor's Note: Clarence Case served as a Justice of the New Jersey Supreme Court from 1929 to 1952 and as Chief Justice from 1946 to 1948. Case also served as Acting Governor of New Jersey for seven days in 1920.]

SI: He was a Republican, which is a little different than today, shows how things have changed.

WF: The last Republican to be elected to the United States Senate from New Jersey. Oh, one other funny story about Case, I'll just tell you, is that Case was an organist. He played the organ. He was born in Franklin Township, right down the road, the Six-Mile Run Reformed Church, where his father was minister at that time. When he came to Rutgers, he needed money. He used to play the organ at the church. Then, he came back in 1960 for, like, an anniversary of the church and he talked about that, how the people would invite him to dinner and all this stuff.

He was very connected, very loyal to Rutgers. He went to Columbia Law School, too. He was always proud of that, but my old dissertation advisor, Jack Nelson, used to run these Taft Institutes in the summer for teachers about civics. He invited Case to speak. He said they'd walk down past Van Dyck Hall, in that area, and Case was talking about, "Oh, I lived there," and this, that and the other thing. He was just very affectionate about his time at Rutgers.

He did that stuff before and after he lost the primary in '78 to Jeffrey Bell, who was a Reagan protégé. Then, he became sort of a public intellectual, for lack of a better term, but they named this professorship after him. Next Wednesday, there will be the Case Professorship Lecture at Rutgers. Barbara Mikulski from Maryland [United States Senator from 1987 to 2017] is going to be giving it. It's at six o'clock or seven o'clock at Douglass. If you haven't signed up, you might want to sign up.

[Editor's Note: Jeffrey Bell defeated Senator Case in the 1978 Republican primary, but was defeated in the general election by Bill Bradley, who then represented New Jersey in the US Senate from 1979 to 1997.]

SI: You have done a lot of writing and research projects, in addition to the Clifford Case book. In general, what have you found the most interesting or rewarding of those?

WF: Well, a couple of things. We did a project with the Rutgers Libraries. Tom Frusciano, who was the University archivist, as you all know, works on the oral history project as well, he and I and a couple other people created a project called Electronic New Jersey, which is an electronic curriculum, units for New Jersey history, all using Rutgers Archives material. There are twenty-three units and they're all on the Internet. That took about thirteen years. We had various projects with different schools over time. Hunterdon Central was involved in it all the time, but other schools were in and out. I think that's making a real contribution to the public schools.

I would say my work on human rights issues is what, really, I still focus a lot on that. I mean, I'm on the board of Human Rights Educators USA, which is an NGO [non-governmental organization] in the United States. It's important because I think we have to continue to push to create a better society. By doing that, I think you need to educate people about what their human rights are, particularly young people. That's been valuable and important for me.

Some of the publications you see in there are about that. In fact, a colleague of mine, Gloria Alter, who lives in Illinois, we're working on a book proposal--it's been submitted, we're waiting to hear if it's going to be approved--to have a book that we would edit on human rights education and teacher education. How does human rights education become part of teacher education for future teachers? That's been an important dimension of my work, I would say.

SI: In the years since you retired, you have still done a lot of work with social studies curricula and educating future social studies teachers. How have you seen the field change, in the New Jersey context, but also in a larger context?

WF: Well, I'll reiterate one of the things I said before--I think that there doesn't seem to be as long-term a commitment of people in it to stay in a district. That has pros and cons, too, but I think good school districts cultivate commitment. I think a second thing is that, in the social studies field today, there's been still quite a bit of discussion and dialogue about what should be the emphasis in social studies, in terms of the rationales, and so forth.

Having said that, I think that the field is much more diverse than it used to be and much more committed to a more inclusive education. For example, New Jersey has passed a law that it requires the study of LGBTQ issues and history in the classroom. That's happening in California now. It's happening in some other states. There's also a vastly increased representation of resources available. The challenge now is not to find the resources. The challenge is to make the choices about the good resources, because there's so much available.

I'm encouraged with the people I work with here, because I think the people are very committed. You find in every class some people who, as they go through student teaching, recognize that maybe this isn't the best choice. That's okay, because student teaching should give the people the idea that they're going to like it or not. Then, I think you work with them.

One of the things that I would recommend that the GSE do (and they haven't done yet) is to really develop a more cohesive alumni program where they stay in touch with them, because I think that would provide a network for them to strengthen. That's something they should decide to do, but I don't know if it's going to happen.

SI: I know New Jersey has done a number of these must-teach subject laws, like the Amistad Law for African American history, the LGBT one you just mentioned and, also, the Holocaust.

WF: Holocaust and genocides, yes.

SI: Yes, I know you have been involved with that. In general, do you see these having an effect or actually being picked up and done by the teachers you work with? How have you seen the Holocaust and genocide aspect being implemented?

WF: Well, New Jersey was one of the most forward-looking in terms of the study of the Holocaust and genocides. We had a recommendation in the '70s; it became law in the '90s. The state really developed an infrastructure of centers, and so forth. In fact, Rutgers just created a minor in Holocaust studies.

I think that's been a positive development, but I think, in a lot of ways, it's still dependent on a couple of things--first of all, knowledge of the people who are teaching it; secondly, their willingness to continue to learn; third, a commitment by the district to actually make it important and value it, because districts in New Jersey have an enormous amount of discretion on how to implement these things. If a district considers it to be marginal, they can make it so.

I think that's a problem and I think that's where the state could actually exercise a little more oversight about how this is actually done. You have to report about it, but that doesn't mean the state's going to say, "Oh, you did one day on the Holocaust for the students in high school?" and they say, "Yes, that's all we can do." I don't really think that's adequate, I'm sorry.

I once had a person in a workshop I was doing, said, "Well, you know what we do? We show *Schindler's List* [a 1993 Steven Spielberg film on the Holocaust] and ask the students to reflect." I'm sorry that's mis-educational. That's an enormously valuable film, but to show the whole film and just ask them to think about it doesn't mean they're going to learn anything.

To me, there should be more sort of oversight, I think, in how these things [are done], not in a punitive way, but say, "Well, how can you do it better?" I think that's where a place like Rutgers and other places that have these centers can really make a positive thing, go from a positive perspective, but also say, "Look, what are you actually doing and how are you doing it?"

SI: Is there anything you want to add that we did not cover?

WF: No, I think this has been a pleasure. It's been my pleasure to be here.

SI: It is great to be able to add to the record, really interesting stuff.

WF: I will say one other thing.

SI: Yes.

WF: Before I forget, is that (and I can't believe I'm saying this), but in September, it will be my fiftieth year that I started my connection with Rutgers.

SI: Wow.

WF: I entered Rutgers in September of 1970 and, on and off, I've been connected to Rutgers for about that whole fifty-year period. Where did it go? [laughter]

SI: All right, thank you very much. We really appreciate your time.

WF: My pleasure, thank you.

BC: Thank you.

IB: Thank you.

MF: Thank you.

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

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