RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARRY FULMER

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an oral history interview with Barry Fulmer, on August 4, 2020, with Shaun Illingworth. I am currently in Hightstown, New Jersey. Would you mind telling us where you are right now?

Barry Fulmer: Sure. I'm in my home in Fort Myers, Florida, which is actually South Fort Myers, just about two miles from Sanibel Island, almost on the Gulf of Mexico. It's nice and sunny and about ninety degrees and no hurricane.

SI: Okay. First, can you tell me where and when you were born?

BF: Sure. I was born in Newark, New Jersey, in Beth Israel Hospital on October 28, 1947.

SI: For the record, can you tell me your parents' names?

BF: Sure. Mildred Halverstein Fulmer, and my father's name was Joseph Fulmer.

SI: Now, starting with your father's side of the family, do you know anything about the family history, maybe if there is an immigration story on that side of the family?

BF: I know very little because, frankly, my father died when I was not even twelve years old. He was only about forty. He died of a heart attack, 1959. So, we never really had a chance to talk very much about family history. Whatever information I got was mostly from my mother. Again, we didn't talk very much about ancestry. I don't know how accurate this is, but I do recall at some point learning or being told that my paternal grandfather had been in the czar's army during World War I. At some point, the family on my father's side came to this country. I think they settled in Philadelphia for a while. I don't know the exact details.

My mother's side of the family came from Romania and Austria in the early part of the twentieth century. My maternal grandparents were married very young, I believe when they were in this country, but, again, family history was not something that we talked about very much. My father and mother met when my father was in the military at Fort Monmouth during World War II. He had been drafted as were so many American males at the time. He managed to work his way up to a sergeant before he was discharged at the end of the war. My mother was working in a civilian capacity, I think in some secretarial or clerical capacity. That's how they met in 1942 or maybe before '42. They married, and, again, I was born five years after they were married.

SI: Do you know if your father went overseas?

BF: No, he didn't. I mean, he did travel in the military during the war to various places across the country. I know that. I don't know exactly where. They both traveled together. His being in the military, maybe he was sent to other bases across the country, but, no, he was never overseas. He certainly was never in combat.

SI: Do you know what he was doing in Fort Monmouth? Was he part of a project, or was he just part of the cadre?

BF: No, I don't know. As I said, if he had lived as I had grown older, we might have had more conversations. I was not of a mind when I was that young to inquire what he did, what his responsibilities were, and all that sort of thing. It would've been interesting. I would've liked to have known that. I always regret that I never did. I just know that he made his way up to sergeant. He might have been doing something in the Quartermaster Corps, quartermaster section, but I don't have any details of what he did while he was in the Army.

SI: Your mother worked there in a civilian capacity. Do you know if she had any other jobs earlier in her life before she got married?

BF: I don't know. She graduated high school. I know she spent some summers along the Jersey Shore, Bradley Beach, Deal, in that area of Monmouth County, with my father. I'm sorry. What was your question again?

SI: I asked if your mother had other jobs before she got married.

BF: I don't know. She graduated from Snyder High School in Jersey City. I understand she had very good grades, but her parents did not have the means to send her to college and maybe, at that time, that wasn't something that most women considered, but I'm sorry that she didn't get to go.

SI: What about your father? After the war, did he use the GI Bill?

BF: No, no, he did not take advantage of college. He was interested in going into business. Members of his family, uncles, were businessmen. In particular, one uncle had what you might call a family business as a wholesaler. He was into selling electric appliances, electric lighting, those sorts of things in Newark, New Jersey. He had a very good business. He was very successful, but he did hire other members of the family to work there, including my father for a little bit.

SI: What part of Newark did they settle in?

BF: Let me see. My parents didn't live in Newark. They lived in Jersey City, yes. One of my uncles owned the business in Newark, but none of them, as far as I can recall, lived in Newark. I mean, they didn't grow up with Philip Roth from Weequahic, but my parents settled in Jersey City and that's where I grew up the first seven years of my life.

SI: Do you have any siblings?

BF: Yes, I do. I have two younger siblings. They both still live in New Jersey, Central and Northern New Jersey. Barbara is the older one, Robin is the younger one, and they have their families, who live in New Jersey and Brooklyn, New York.

SI: Can I just pause for one second?

BF: Sure.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: You lived the first seven years of your life in Jersey City.

BF: Correct.

SI: Do you recall anything about that period of your life?

BF: Growing up in Jersey City, well, I went to first grade in Jersey City. We left the apartment that we had on Fairview Avenue because, unfortunately, there was a fire in our apartment. Fortunately, we weren't hurt. We got out, but it kind of destroyed the apartment. We wound up--it was 1954 and it was me and my oldest sister, who had been just born--born in 1951, excuse me--and my parents--we moved in with my mother's sister and brother-in-law, my aunt and uncle, who also lived in Jersey City at the time. We stayed with them, I think, for a month or two, and then my parents wound up looking for a home in the "suburbs" and wound up in 1954 buying a home in Springfield, New Jersey and moved there. Other than that, I don't have any real great remembrances of what it was like growing up in Jersey City.

SI: Okay, what was your father doing for a living then? Was he still working for his uncle?

BF: At some point, he left. I don't remember what the circumstances were. I think he wanted to go out on his own. He opened up a similar business. I'm trying to remember where it was. I think in Union, New Jersey, a retail business, selling lighting, going to other businesses to see if he could sell them lighting appliances, that sort of thing. He had that for a few years before he died.

SI: Did your mother work outside the home?

BF: She did not at that time. In 1955, my younger sister Robin was born, and so she pretty much stayed home taking care of the three of us.

SI: When you moved to Springfield, what was the neighborhood you moved to like?

BF: It was certainly residential. Springfield was a suburb of Newark, and a lot of the homes were like ours, a split level. I would say middle class. It was a developing town. There still was farmland. We lived at the end of a corner, and beyond our house was a large field, which at some point had been part of a nursery and I imagine it was farmed at some point. Other parts of the town were still farmland and/or nurseries. They're all gone, of course, by now. They're all homes or condos or whatever. But the town then

was still developing. I recall, from some other information I had, that maybe there were about seven thousand people in Springfield in the 1950s. The population significantly increased over the next ten, twenty, thirty years.

There were two elementary schools, one regional high school, Jonathan Dayton Regional High School. In the mid-'50s, the school district built a middle school--junior high school, we called it--grades six, seven and eight, Florence M. Gaudineer, named after a long-term nurse, I think, in the district. When I entered elementary school, I went to one of the older elementary schools, Chisolm. I forget the first name of the school, Edward Chisolm [Raymond Chilsolm], something like that, in Springfield. I went there for about a year until a new school closer to my home, Edward V. Walton, was built, grades kindergarten through fifth. I believe it was fifth grade. I started there afterward, finished in '55-ish, yes.

SI: What did you think about these early educational experiences in Springfield?

BF: What did I think about early education experience? Well, I liked school. I was always a good student. I wasn't a straight "A" student, but I wasn't a "C" student either. I was in between. I liked some of my teachers, some of my teachers a lot. What can I say, growing up in the '50s? What can I say? The '50s were not known for a lot of excitement politically, socially. That didn't come later until the '60s, really. I just remember that we did have, which we don't have today, air raid drills because it was the time of the Cold War. Periodically, maybe every two months or three months, teachers and administrators would march students into the hallways, and actually I think we may have had to kneel down to the ground with our heads against the wall and our hands over our heads like this [covers head], which wasn't going to give you much protection in case of a nuclear war, but that's what they did back then in the '50s for school kids, or at least that's what I remember going through in elementary school in the '50s. Other than that, I can remember I had teachers that I liked, teachers maybe I wasn't so crazy about, but nothing in particular.

SI: It's interesting. A lot of folks of your generation remember the air raid drills, the duck-and-cover type thing. Do you remember being scared at the time? Was it something that concerned you, or was it just something you did?

BF: Something that we did. I don't remember any of my teachers or school administrators, nor my parents, telling me why this was going on, why we did this. Maybe there was some talk of the Russians being bad or something like that, talk about how Communism was bad but very minimal. I mean, they just didn't get into that. I will tell you, and this is nothing to be secretive about, my father was an Eisenhower Republican, disliked FDR [Franklin D. Roosevelt]. I remember him making some remark about FDR, which I disagreed with as I grew older, but that was his opinion, his right. My mother was an Adlai Stevenson Democrat, and they loved each other very dearly. I don't remember them arguing about really much of anything. Politics, I mean, she had her view, he had his view, and that was that. [Editor's Note: Dwight D. Eisenhower defeated Adlai Stevenson in the presidential elections of 1952 and 1956.]

I remember Stevenson had a political campaign rally in 1956 in Jersey City, after we had already moved to Springfield. I remember my parents driving by it. We went to see it. I remember, there was Stevenson maybe 150 feet away in a car or something like that. My father said, "Oh, that's Adlai Stevenson. He's running for president." But there weren't any comments about good, bad, pro or con, or anything like that. I remember, sometimes when I went somewhere with my father, wearing an "I Like Ike" button in '56, but, again, there was no discussion in our family about politics.

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

BF: Yes, they were both Jewish, and I did attend Jewish religion school, Hebrew School, in '54 through '60. Springfield had one synagogue. It was a Conservative synagogue. It was in what had been a former farmhouse, I think, which was eventually torn down, and a new building was built, 1959, '60, something like that. But, yes, that was my early religious education.

SI: Again, looking at the neighborhood and the larger community, was there a mixture of Christians and Jews, people from different ethnic backgrounds?

BF: Well, yes.

SI: What was it like?

BF: I mean, there was a very--I never took a census. I don't know what the numbers were. I think that you probably had more Jews moving in, especially after the riots in '67 in Newark. A lot of Jews who lived in Newark, including my wife's family, moved to Springfield. Actually, there's another reason why they moved, not because of the riots. But there was some migration into Springfield, which gained a larger Jewish population because other synagogues were built in Springfield in the early '60s and mid-'60s. Let me just try to think about what else I was going to say. Ethnicity, most of the community was non-Jewish, Catholic, Protestant, but there was a significant minority Jewish population. There also was a Black population, which was pretty much located in one part of town in a three-block area of middle-class homes, split levels, I remember.

Jumping ahead a little bit, I, for a very short time, had an amateur radio license. I had friends who were into amateur radio. This was going into high school in the early '60s. But I will never forget that one of the persons that I became friendly with, who was in the amateur radio community so-to-speak, was a Black man who lived in the Black area of town, who was blind, and he had had a license that was more advanced than the one that I had, a very nice guy, very friendly. I'd go over to his home. We'd talk about amateur radio. I don't know what happened to him, unfortunately. I think he was handicapped in a wheelchair also but was very smart. I was very impressed. Although there wasn't really, not unlike in other places, there wasn't a lot of interaction between the Black community and the non-Black community; it just was there. We didn't have segregation in our schools, of course. By the time I went to school, it was way after 1954, and there

were some Black kids in the schools but a very small number. [Editor's Note: In *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954), the Supreme Court ruled that racial segregation of children in public schools was unconstitutional.] I seem to remember one kid, nice kid, played baseball with him, but other than that, I really don't have many other memories of interacting with Black children and people, other than what I just mentioned to you, in Springfield.

SI: When did you start getting interested in amateur radio?

BF: I had a neighbor down the street, Neil Huback, who was an engineer, his wife was a teacher. Lovely, lovely people. He had a tall radio tower in his backyard. He had an advanced license and he would speak to amateurs all over the world. I think that helped get me interested in it. Then, in high school, we had an amateur radio club, too. There were a group of students who became interested in that. But I remember studying to take my, what was called, novice amateur radio license exam. It was the lowest level. That's where you'd usually begin. I had to learn Morse code, and I had to be able to use a--oh, my goodness, what do you call it now? A Morse code sender, but that's not the right word. A transmitter? That's not the right word.

SI: A key?

BF: Well, it was a key, yes, and you tapped a certain number of dots or dashes, which translated into characters or letters. In order to pass the test, you had to do a certain number of words per minute, averaging, I think, five letters per word. So, for the novice, you'd have to do about five words, which doesn't sound like a lot, but when you're just learning Morse code, with at least twenty-six letters, it was a bit of a challenge but not hard. Then, there was some technical knowledge that you had to gain, and you could study for it. You had to take a written test, a multiple-choice test. I passed that the first time with him, and I did it by him, by Mr. Huback. I also had a shortwave radio at home. I was interested in listening to different radio stations around the world because that was a time when there was a lot of shortwave. We didn't have any internet. We didn't have computers.

The novice license was only for a year because the organization that, along with the FCC [Federal Communications Commission], administered tests and education with regard to amateur or what's now called ham radio. The organization was called the American Radio Relay League, ARRL, and they were based in Connecticut, as I recall. They provided a lot of information with regard to learning about ham radio, but you could only have the novice license for one year. Then, if you wanted to go on, you had to go for a technical license, and above that, a general license, and then advanced. I never did go beyond the novice. It expired and that was that, but I did get interested in shortwave radio.

I'll tell a funny story going into high school, and I think this happened in '66 or '67. One of my friends, who was a year ahead of me in high school, I think he might have been a German major, or at least he was taking German. He did not like his German teacher.

So, he wrote a letter favorable to Russia to Radio Moscow and signed it [with] the name of the teacher. I and other friends, who listened into shortwave radio, listened to the English language broadcast of Radio Moscow one night; we knew about it--what the other friend had done. They read his letter with the name of the teacher. Well, you can imagine what hell broke loose when the word got back to the school district. The student was not expelled, but he certainly was, in some way--very bright kid--certainly was in some way admonished, reprimanded. I guess the teacher at the time, you can imagine, at the height of the Cold War, was mortified, but for a lot of us, it was something to chuckle about. It's always stuck in my memory, but I won't repeat the name of the teacher nor the student. The student did not go to Rutgers.

SI: Wow, that is really something. When your father passed away in '59, how was your mother able to keep the house? Was she able to keep the house and keep the family going?

BF: Yes. My maternal grandparents lived in Jersey City. Let's see. So, myself and my older sister were in school. My mother did take a job at some point, but she was able to be home for us when we left for school and when we returned to school. At some point, my maternal grandparents moved in with us, so I think they helped out caring for us, too. My mother worked nearby, doing some retail kind of work. We did manage to get by, and we did stay in the house until we were grown and out of the house.

SI: You were in middle school then.

BF: '59 to '62, approximately, Florence M. Gaudineer Junior High.

SI: As you got older, going through school in junior high, maybe in high school, did you have a subject that you really enjoyed or you were most interested in?

BF: I was actually interested in math and science at the time. I was in advanced math classes in high school. Ms. Bielecki, I remember her name, was an excellent, excellent math teacher, algebra. I loved algebra. I tended to be interested in science, and that was where I thought I was going to go in terms of my future career. It didn't turn out that way, but that's okay.

SI: Aside from the amateur radio, were there other activities you were involved in outside of school?

BF: Yes, I liked Little League. I played catcher and first base. I played Little League for a few years and enjoyed that. I don't think I ever was good enough to be on a high school team, but I did like baseball. I was in the band, but that was an in-school activity. I played clarinet. I was in the high school marching band and also, in concert season, concert band. Let me add something else that I didn't mention before about shortwave radio. Kids who were into this would write to different shortwave radio stations and were getting what were called QSL cards, which were cards that were printed by different radio stations around the world. Other amateur radio operators also had their own QSL

cards. I remember I got a QSL card from Barry Goldwater, which I still have. Very nice. I can talk about Barry Goldwater, too, in a little bit. Anyway, I will leave it at that. That was my most noteworthy QSL card. But that was big then. Now, who knows about QSL cards? Do you know what a QSL card is?

SI: I have heard of them before. I know one of the things you would try to do is see how far away you could get a contact or try to collect them from every country or something like that.

BF: Right, sure. A little bit like baseball cards. Baseball cards were big in the '50s.

SI: In your high school career, were there any teachers that stand out in terms of being like a mentor or encouraging you to go forward with your education?

BF: Actually, I think the teachers I had in junior high school--if I could go back a little bit--I had a social studies teacher, William Pfeiffer, who was one of the best teachers I've ever had. He was tough. He was a hard marker. I wasn't a bright student with him because I don't think I was academically mature enough to really appreciate his teaching style and how good he really was. But he made me think. I learned a lot from him that, in later years, I looked back upon. I tried to find him after I left high school and college. He supposedly had become a curator at Colonial Williamsburg and I wrote away to Colonial Williamsburg, but they didn't seem to have any record of him. But in terms of someone who made a big impression upon me, he did.

I also had a teacher in--let's see, is this high school now? I think so. I think it was in high school. It's over fifty years ago, so it kind of blends. I had a teacher named Mr. Lonnie. I forget whether his first name was Bill or not--English teacher. He was also one of the best teachers I've ever had. English was not my best subject. He was a tough teacher. He was a tough grader, but he made you work. Looking back, I realized how much I grew to appreciate him.

The funny thing was when I was at Rutgers and I would work a little bit in the library, the Alexander Library, he was a student, I think, in library science. He was going for his master's degree in the '60s. Every so often, he'd run into me, or I'd run into him in the library, and we had some very, very nice conversations. So, I didn't hold it against him if I didn't get the best grades. I subsequently learned, I think, that he died of a heart attack at age fifty, at some point. It's very sad, very, very sad. He was from North Carolina, had a southern accent. He was a great teacher, a great teacher. I miss him.

SI: When you were in high school, did you have any part-time jobs, or did you work in the summer?

BF: Yes, come to think of it, I did. I worked in a local drug store. I made deliveries. I learned to drive a stick shift on a 1962 VW [Volkswagen] Beetle that the drug store owner used for making deliveries, and that was a skill that served me very well in the

coming years, being able to drive a stick shift. It got me through Europe, which I can tell you about later if you're interested. Yes, I did that for a few years.

SI: When you were in high school, were there other extracurricular activities you were involved in, for example, like student government, the school paper?

BF: No, pretty much band and the radio. I'm trying to think. Pretty much band and the amateur radio club, yes.

SI: What got you involved with the clarinet?

BF: Oh, I don't know. Maybe it was because I knew of Benny Goodman, and that kind of influenced me. My mother got me a clarinet, a Bundy. At one point, during concert season, I took up--because the high school, Jonathan Dayton Regional High School, had a bass clarinet, which is this long, long clarinet. It almost looked like a saxophone and you have to almost rest it on the ground, but I thought it'd be something different. Same fingering as the clarinet, much lower tone, much lower sound. I remember I had a solo in a concert--one whole note. That was my solo. No one else played, just me, and I didn't botch it up. So, it went well. That was pretty much it though.

SI: I am curious when you were a teenager, would you have the freedom to kind of go around the town or even further on your own, or was it pretty much you had to be either in school or at some activity?

BF: My mother was pretty liberal, I guess, because I was a boy. You have to remember, in those days, I don't think we were worried about crime or about bad things happening to kids. Maybe there wasn't as much traffic as there came to be. I could ride my bicycle safely. I remember, in high school, I had a girlfriend in Hillside, who went to Hillside High School, and I would even bicycle from Springfield. Somehow, I'd make my way to Hillside and back. It made my mother worry, but nothing happened to me. Yes, I didn't feel very restricted in what I could do. Kids whom I was friendly with were in Springfield or in surrounding towns, Newark, West Orange, Union, that I had met during the summers down the Jersey Shore. They pretty much could go and come when they wanted and managed, believe it or not, to stay out of trouble. Drugs was not a big issue then, I'm just trying to remember, not even marijuana. I mean, that didn't happen, at least as it pertained to me, until college. In high school, we didn't even use alcohol, like wine or hard liquor. Maybe some kid would somehow get some beer, but that was the most of it. I mean, even at the parties I went to, there wasn't alcohol. It was a different time, I think.

SI: When you would go down to the shore, would your family rent a place?

BF: My paternal grandfather had died in 1951 in the worst train crash in New Jersey history. On the Pennsylvania Railroad in Woodbridge, a train went off the tracks, and eighty-five people were killed and, unfortunately, my grandfather was one of them. My paternal grandmother stayed in their house in Bradley Beach, which is still there as far as

I know, and she passed away from cancer in 1954. I believe, soon thereafter, the house was sold. My parents used to rent out a bungalow or an apartment in Bradley Beach in the '40s, before I was even born. They would go down there often and my maternal grandparents also. Eventually, I think they would rent out apartments in Bradley, and we would spend the summers on the shore, on the beach. That's how I came to really like the beach and a large reason why I'm here on the Gulf Coast, where I am in retirement.

SI: When you were going through high school, were you always thinking about college? Was that always your goal?

BF: Yes, I think so. I think so. I mean, it was a middle-class community. Whether you were Jewish or non-Jewish, I think that parents pretty much expected that you would go on to college. Certainly, the high school courses that I took were all geared to going to college. So, that was always pretty much assumed, at least in the classes among the student and kids that I was friendly with and I knew.

SI: Particularly in high school, in general, how much did you know about the larger world, the nation, international events? Were you a consumer of news? Did you read newspapers or follow the news on the radio or television?

BF: It is interesting you ask that question. As I said, my family did not discuss politics. Even after my father died, my mother didn't talk about politics much, but I learned that she was a Democrat. At that point, maybe because of my father's influence, maybe because it was the Cold War, I tended to identify with being more Republican. Anti-communism was always in the news. I just had a thought. Let me try to see if I can bring it back up. Can we just stop for a moment?

[RECORDING PAUSED]

BF: I remember, in 1962 was the Cuban Missile Crisis, and of course, the whole country was concerned about that. Kennedy was president. But my views tended to be more, I guess, conservative in terms of the larger world. I mean, it was drummed into Americans' heads how terrible Communism was, how terrible Russia was. I don't remember the McCarthy period because that ended in '54. Nor do I remember the anti-communist hearings of the House on Unamerican Activities Committee (HUAC). So, I was not involved in any demonstrations or anything like that. [Editor's Note: In October 1962, photographs taken by an American U2 spy plane revealed Soviet nuclear missile installations in Cuba. President John F. Kennedy responded by ordering a quarantine, or naval blockade, around Cuba to prevent more Soviet weapons from getting there. For thirteen days, the public feared the breakout of nuclear war between the U.S. and Soviet Union. The Cuban Missile Crisis was resolved when Soviet leader Nikita Khrushchev agreed to remove the missiles from Cuba, in exchange for the U.S. not invading Cuba. Secretly, the U.S also agreed to remove its missiles from Turkey. Senator Joseph McCarthy's accusations of Communist infiltration in the U.S. government led to a nationwide witch-hunt in the 1950s to unearth alleged Communists.]

Oh, now I remember what I wanted to [say], which may seem a little counter to what I just said about my early political feelings, but my seventh and eighth-grade social studies teacher, William Pfeiffer, some of his classes were devoted to reading *The New York Times* and learning about newspaper reporting and learning how to understand opinion writing and trying to critically analyze opinions. It took me several years to understand why he used *The New York Times*. Looking back, I think it was great. That was my first exposure to *The New York Times.* My parents got the *Newark Star-Ledger,* which used to be a very good paper. I don't think that is the case, or I suspect that's not the case anymore from the little that I've read, but I guess the papers have to try to survive in any way they can. At any rate, Mr. Pfeiffer used *The New York Times*, and I learned a lot. I learned how to analyze opinion and different kinds of opinion, not politically necessarily, but analyzing in terms of the language that was used and why a particular writer maybe used the language that he used, or she used, or they used. That made a big impression upon me. I have to say I've been a fan of *The New York Times* ever since, even though politically I remained then as a Republican, you might say, in my early years.

SI: During this period, were you following the Civil Rights Movement? Were you aware of that?

BF: In '67, we had the riots in Newark. You may remember that. When you grow up in a town like Springfield though, it was like living in a bubble, a white bubble. Even though it was only a few miles away, I didn't go into Newark. I would just read about the riots. I really didn't have any opinion one way or other, right or wrong. I just followed the news. I remember when Governor Richard Hughes sent in--I believe he sent in National Guardsmen, I could be wrong--police, the National Guard. But there was severe rioting in Newark. I was aware of racism and all that sort of thing.

Politically, coming from my background--and you have to understand being Jewish, you learn something about the Holocaust--so, my sympathies, if they were anywhere, were probably with Blacks. As I said, I had favorable views of Black people, even in Springfield, growing up. So, I didn't see the riots as being, "Oh, how horrible Black people were," like some people may have thought. Again, growing up in Springfield, even though it's just a few miles away, it was still like living in a bubble. The riots were reported on the news. You read about it in the *Newark Star-Ledger*; maybe there's something on the TV about it, but that was the extent of my knowledge of Civil Rights-related events. Later, of course, when Martin Luther King was killed in '68, when I was a sophomore, going on to be a junior in college at Rutgers, that was a horrible thing.

In high school, in those years, I do remember--let me back up a bit--I do remember in the early '60s, there was a reform synagogue in Springfield, a new reform synagogue I did not belong to. There was a rabbi who was very, very liberal-minded. His name was Israel Dresner, who's still alive. He invited Martin Luther King to come and speak at his synagogue. This must have been '63-'64. I mean, it was after King's speech in Washington. I didn't go to see him, but I remember there being lots and lots of cars parked outside the synagogue. Lots and lots of people had come to see Martin Luther King speak. But other than what I've already said, that's pretty much the extent of my

awareness of what was going on in terms of civil rights and that sort of thing. [Editor's Note: Israel Seymour Dresner is a rabbi and civil rights activist who was close friends with Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. For twelve years, he was the rabbi of Temple Sha'arey Shalom in Springfield, New Jersey, where King spoke in 1963 and 1966.]

SI: When you were looking at colleges, what were you looking for? How did Rutgers come up in the mix?

BF: I was looking for a good college. I'll tell you, I even remember where else I applied. I applied to Syracuse University. I applied to the University of Pittsburgh. I applied to Newark College of Engineering, which has since become New Jersey Institute of Technology, because I thought that was the kind of thing I was going to be headed into, engineering or science or math. Stevens Institute of Technology also. My grades weren't quite good enough, nor could I have afforded to go to an Ivy League school. And Rutgers. These are all good schools. I got scholarship money from the University of Pittsburgh. I got scholarship money from Stevens Institute, but I wound up applying and going to Rutgers. Why? Well, it was the least expensive. Rutgers did give me some grant money and what was called work-study, which is why I wound up in the library working, and some loans also from Rutgers. Maybe I was also impressed because it was one of the eight colonial colleges. That's hard to say. Besides Stevens Institute, I don't think I visited any of the other colleges. I didn't go out to the University of Pittsburgh or up to Syracuse. I don't remember, but maybe I also favored Rutgers because it was also inexpensive. That's a good question. Maybe because my father had just died three years before and maybe I didn't want to be that far away from home in Pittsburgh or Syracuse. I'm glad that I didn't wind up going to Newark College of Engineering, NJIT now, or Stevens because I realize that wasn't really where my mind was going to ultimately wind up. So, it was Rutgers, yes.

SI: You graduated high school in '66 and went to Rutgers that fall.

BF: Yes.

SI: Okay. Do you remember your first experience on campus, the first couple of weeks? What was it like adjusting?

BF: Oh, you go to orientation with all the other students and you've got your Rutgers tie on and you've got your beanie or whatever you want to call it. I don't know what they do now at Rutgers. I think there was a lot of school spirit that was ingrained in you or instilled in you back then, "On the Banks of the Old Raritan," and all that sort of thing. I guess I was just impressed, impressed with the campus. It had a--what can I say?--a colonial feeling, a rock-solid feeling. Maybe those aren't really the best words to describe it. It's hard looking back over fifty years ago to try to remember what it was that I found the most memorable.

Freshman year was when I discovered that I wasn't going to stay with the major that I thought I would. I took freshman chemistry, which I found very hard, not like my senior

year in high school when I was in an advanced chemistry class in high school. But it didn't work out academically, for whatever reason, in chemistry. Other than that, I didn't have any real strong memories. Maybe I went to a football game, that sort of thing. I had thought of trying out for the Rutgers band, but I didn't. I was feeling my way around. For about a year, I was working at WRSU. I did do some of the newscasting. But other than that, I don't really have much in my memory about the first year at Rutgers. I stayed in the dorms. That didn't make a great impression upon me one way or the other. [laughter]

SI: I was going to ask what dorm life was like then. Was there a social circle on the dorm floor or that sort of thing?

BF: I think I stayed in Mettler. I know that my roommate and I did not get along. He was more interested in fraternity life and that sort of thing. Although I pledged, I didn't get in, and I'm not sorry I didn't get into a fraternity. I think that was in sophomore year though. The social life--what were they called?--preceptors, I think maybe they tried to organize a party in the dorm or whatnot. I'm trying to think of my freshman year. I know, at one point, I played a lot of ping pong. But, yes, I don't have a lot of recollections. I'd go over to Douglass. I'd go to mixers. Do they still call them mixers at Rutgers?

SI: No.

BF: Mixer dances at the--oh, my goodness, why can't I remember the name of the student center before the one across from the Commons was built.

SI: Oh, The Ledge?

BF: The Ledge, yes. The Ledge, there would be dances over there. Occasionally, I would take the bus across town to go over to Douglass, the usual stuff, but nothing that really stands out in my mind, at least freshman year.

SI: You mentioned that pretty quickly, you decided to switch gears academically. What did you wind up majoring in or focusing on?

BF: Yes. Let's see, even though I was predisposed to science or math in high school, I decided to take an introductory course in political science in sophomore year. I don't remember the name of the graduate student who was the TA [teaching assistant], but he was very good. I really liked him. Maybe it was from his classes, maybe it was from some of the reading that I began to realize that my views on the Vietnam War, which was coming certainly into focus by '67-'68, that it wasn't what I had thought it was. This is, of course, after Eugene Genovese's--what do you call them?--not rallies, but he spoke at Rutgers in '65. [Editor's Note: Eugene Genovese (1930-2012), a scholar of slavery and the American South, served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1963 to 1967. On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in at Scott Hall dedicated to discussing U.S. foreign policy in Vietnam, Genovese declared, "Those of you who know me know that I am a Marxist and

a Socialist. Therefore, unlike most of my distinguished colleagues here this morning, I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Amidst the firestorm of controversy that ensued, Rutgers President Mason Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted public pressure to dismiss Genovese and staunchly defended the principle of academic freedom. Genovese later resigned and moved to Canada, where he taught at Sir George Williams University. Subsequent teach-ins occurred in the fall of 1965 and continued in 1966.]

SI: Teach-in.

BF: Teach-ins, yes. I came in just after that. I began to realize from my poli-sci class and some of the reading that I was doing that the Vietnam War was a war that we really should not have been involved in. I began to distrust more and more what the [Lyndon B.] Johnson Administration was telling us about the Vietnam War. I think that really changed me around politically 180 degrees. I do remember before then--this is interesting. I don't know how many people have told you this. Maybe they weren't there; they don't remember. The year before, in '66, when I was a freshman, maybe it was early '67. So, Barry Goldwater had run for president in 1964 against Johnson and, of course, lost. I was a Goldwater supporter then, and he came to speak to Rutgers and he came to speak in the gymnasium. That was a time when you wore a sports jacket and a tie, a Rutgers tie, even if you went to events afterwards or programs sometimes. Oh, it brings back another thing. Remind me if I forget to tell you about Jean Shepherd my first year. Do you know who Jean Shepherd was? No, okay. Most people probably don't remember Jean Shepherd.

Anyway, let me go back to Barry Goldwater. I'm sitting on the floor of the gymnasium, maybe ten or so rows back, and there's Goldwater talking on the stage. All of a sudden, from the balcony above us--and, by the way, the gymnasium was filled up to hear Goldwater, pro, con, whatever--I'm sitting there and from the balcony, all the way up in the balcony, I think it was a grad student. He stood up, and all of a sudden, we all hear him shouting, "You goddamn fascist bastard." I'll never forget it, never forget it. I mean, there was just silence and then booing, and all chaos broke loose. I forget exactly what Goldwater said but something like, "Meet me outside." [laughter] But Goldwater stood there very resolute. Immediately, campus police came up and removed the fellow from upstairs. I don't know what happened to him, but I'll never forget it.

Let me talk about Jean Shepherd. Jean Shepherd was a humorist in the '50s, who came from Hammond, Indiana, and he had a late radio show on WOR (NYC) at night, 710 on the AM dial. He also had had a TV program for a short while in NYC. He would tell stories. He was a raconteur, a satirist, but mostly talked about his upbringing, about his experiences as a kid and his family growing up in Indiana. I would listen to him; I had my shortwave/AM radio next to my bed at home and I would plug in, not a headphone, but it was a little speaker that I put under my pillow. I don't think I told my mother. I would listen to Jean Shepherd at eleven o'clock [PM], which is why I was tired the next day when I'd go to school. I loved Jean Shepherd.

Moving forward to Rutgers. The University invited Jean Shepherd to come speak, and he spoke in one of the small rooms in the Commons. I remember you could sign up for it, freshmen, sophomores, and went and heard Jean Shepherd speak. That was quite enjoyable. I really liked that. I think he retired from his radio career and moved to Sanibel a few miles from here, and then died in Fort Myers in 1999.

I also remember--whoever was involved in arranging this I don't recall--that there was, also in one of the smaller rooms in the Commons, for those students who signed up, a body painting exhibition for a young woman who was wearing a bikini. There was a body painting artist who painted her whole body. I think anybody could sign up for it. [laughter] Any student could sign up for it if they wanted to. Again, something that kind of stuck out in my mind. Anyway, go ahead.

SI: In looking back at the yearbook and *The Targum*, it is interesting to see all the people who came through either as speakers or acts that played at The Ledge or the gym. I was wondering, one, if you remembered any others. Also, I know a lot of them in your freshman year would be tied to the two hundredth anniversary commemorations. Do you remember anything about that?

BF: Let's see. 1766. I don't remember anything about commemorations. We certainly were aware of it. I'm sure there were celebrations that went on, and I may have observed them. Looking back, it doesn't strike my memory. Yes, I'm sorry, I can't tell you anything about what went on. Maybe other people can.

You asked about other speakers. Do you want me to tell you about other speakers while I was at Rutgers, that were of note? Norman Thomas, who was a socialist, I think he ran for president several times, he spoke at The Ledge. I remember seeing him there. An interesting event was when Edward Teller, who was the "Father of the Hydrogen Bomb," came to speak at Rutgers. I think it may have been '68 or '69, at the height of the Vietnam War, and there were protests. It was in the auditorium in the Physics Building on what we then called the Heights, or Busch Campus now. The room was filled up because we wanted to hear what Edward Teller had to say, whether you liked him or you didn't like him. There were some students who had signs against the war. Teller was pro-Vietnam War. The students were peaceful. They did not try to shout him down or anything like that, but he was very adamant that he was not going to speak if the students did not remove their signs. Well, the students would not remove their signs. Again, they didn't try to prevent him from speaking, but he took it as a personal offense and I think he had a very difficult personality, very stubborn, and he walked out. He just walked out. That was my image of Edward Teller.

Let's see. What else? I also remember, I think it was in '68, before the presidential election, Hubert Humphrey came to speak on the Mall, not far from Willie the Silent. I think the platform was set up in front of Scott Hall, and a number of Rutgers officials and Humphrey were up there. The whole area surrounding that was filled up. A lot of people, a lot of students, faculty, other people came to hear Humphrey speak. What was interesting, looking back, I don't know if this sort of thing would be allowed, but I had an

8mm movie camera, an old 8 mm movie camera, that my father had gotten when he was alive and had used. I got real close to Humphrey, maybe within twenty feet. No fencing around him. There were no, as far as I could tell, Secret Service men who were standing around him. No obstacles. They didn't know whether I had a camera, or whether I had a gun. I mean, it was really amazing, looking back on it, and I got pretty much as close as I wanted to him. I wasn't going to go five feet in front of Humphrey, but I was there on the grass and he was a few feet up speaking and I took some movie pictures of him, which I still have. That's something that I remember, quite interesting. At some point, if you want, I will talk about the last semester at Rutgers.

SI: I want to get into that last semester a little later. You said you were involved with WRSU. How did that come about? You said you were a newsreader. Were you on a program?

BF: Well, as I indicated before, I was interested in ham radio, so I think it followed from that. At one point, I thought maybe I might go into radio broadcasting. It didn't work out that way. So, I spent some time reading the news with some other students. I don't recall much about that, other than I did work at WRSU for about a year, freshman, sophomore year.

SI: When you read the news, was it just stuff that came off the AP wire, or was it other sources?

BF: It was stuff that came off the AP wire. Let's see, I didn't do any reporting of Rutgers news like you find in *The Targum*. One thing I did for WRSU my freshman year, so that was '66, when there were elections, and I guess it was November of 1966--I had just been a freshman for two months or so, I had joined WRSU then--and I volunteered to go to Detroit to help cover some of the local elections. Romney, not Mitt, but his father George was running for governor. I think there was some other local election. So, I got sent to Michigan, and Rutgers flew me out to Michigan with about two or three other students. We stayed overnight in a hotel. I don't remember if I met Romney, but I do remember that I had a little tape recorder with me. I do remember getting in an elevator, and who gets in the elevator with me but Daniel Schorr, who was a very famous reporter, journalist, CBS reporter, and later made Nixon's enemies list. [He was] very, very well known, Daniel Schorr, and I spoke with him. I don't remember reporting much about him. Anyway, that's something that I did when I was at WRSU, going out to Detroit and covering some of the local elections.

SI: What would you be doing, interviewing people at the polls after they voted?

BF: Some of the candidates. I mean, we obviously had to do some research about some of the candidates who were running, whether it was for local offices or Congress, midterm elections. Other than meeting Daniel Schorr, maybe George Romney, I honestly don't recall much else about my time there.

SI: Do you remember being sent to cover any other events or maybe something closer to the campus?

BF: For WRSU? No.

SI: I am curious, one issue that the radio station is always tied in with is they would read out information about the draft and registration. I think, later on, they even had broadcasts on how to avoid the draft or that sort of thing. Do you remember any of that from your time there?

BF: No. I don't remember when the draft came into effect. I know that I had gotten a draft number, but that was in '69. So, '66, '67, it was not something that was on my mind then. Certainly, it was talked about on campus, a lot of talk about it on campus. I don't remember RSU or *Targum* or any other news sources talking about how to get out of the draft. No, quite honestly, I don't. I don't, at that time. I guess there were some students who were talking about going to Canada perhaps at that time, but I don't remember anything along the lines of what you mentioned. Certainly, there was a lot of discussion about the Vietnam War and, as I indicated, in my sophomore year, learning more about the war. As you got into later grade levels, you certainly became more concerned about it. But, no, I don't remember anything about news sources about trying to avoid the draft, nothing like that. Maybe there was, but I just don't recall.

SI: You mentioned this one political science class that at least started you questioning your beliefs up to that point. Do you remember the professor that taught that class?

BF: I don't. I don't remember the TA, and I don't remember the intro poli-sci professor. It's funny, I don't. No, I'm sorry.

SI: Do any professors stand out in your memory from either your major or other professors you may have taken?

BF: Yes, yes. I really enjoyed my class on South Asia with Josef Silverstein. I believe he's still alive. I don't know if he's still associated with Rutgers, but I know that his expertise actually was on Myanmar and Burma. He was excellent. I remember having a number of discussions with him about career and all that sort of thing. I thought he was a wonderful professor, extremely knowledgeable, and that was one of my favorite courses. Another course that I took, I think it was my sophomore year--well, it had to be my sophomore year--was "Political Philosophy" with Benjamin Barber, who, I think, in later years, became an advisor to some Democratic candidates, including Hillary [Clinton], before he died relatively recently. I don't know how long he was at Rutgers. At some point, he left and went to the University of Maryland. But it was his first or second year at Rutgers, so he was fairly young. To me, he was "old" because he was a professor, but I remember taking a course with him.

I also remember in my senior year having a course with Ross Baker, who is still at Rutgers. He also had begun, I think, in '64, '65, something like that, teaching at Rutgers'

poli-sci department, and I enjoyed his class. He was an interesting fellow, a very interesting professor. He made his classes interesting, a lot of discussion in his classes.

One thing that I know about Ross going into 1970 is that when students had taken over Old Queens in the second semester '70, I remember him rushing off from class, saying, "I've got to go talk to the students over at Old Queens." What his role exactly was or whether he tried to be a negotiator with the students, I don't know exactly. I didn't follow up, but that's something that I remember about him. I'll mention that story about Mason Gross later.

[Note: Mr. Fulmer added the following paragraph post-interview.] Recently, I read an article by him in the local Ft. Myers, Fla., newspaper. He wrote about the suffering in the Civil War compared to that caused by the coronavirus. I e-mailed him and he e-mailed me back. It was good to hear from him after all these years.

SI: You said you were in Mettler Hall originally. Where did you live in later years?

BF: Let's see, my goodness, I lived in one of the River Dorms. It's funny. I don't think it was Demarest. Frelinghuysen, maybe it was Frelinghuysen. I think my sophomore year, I lived in Frelinghuysen, yes. I don't have any distinct memories other than my roommate, whom I haven't seen in fifty years.

SI: What other things would you do extracurricular or socially? Were you in any organizations or clubs or that sort of thing?

BF: I hate to disappoint you, but not really. I was involved in some anti-war demonstrations. I wasn't one of the most vocal persons, but I did feel an obligation to march. I remember there was a march, a peaceful march. It may have been down George Street or one of the other streets that runs parallel to George Street to the Douglass College campus, very peaceful anti-war demonstrations. There were rallies. I did, for a short time, belong to--there was an organization called SANE [National Committee for a Sane Nuclear Policy]. It had to do with nuclear disarmament. Students tended to be moderate as opposed to an organization called SDS, Students for a Democratic Society. So, I was involved with SANE a little bit. It's very hard thinking back over fifty years. I just have these bits and spurts of memories of talking to people and other students and being in certain places, but I can't say that I led this or I led that. I think, like most students, I was probably just trying to get my degree and decide what else I was going to do with the rest of my life.

SI: Again, it is really interesting that you had this change in your political view. Would you say by the end of your freshman year, you had the antiwar sentiment, or was it later on?

BF: No, I think it was in the middle-end of my sophomore year. Again, I don't remember what the readings were that we had in my first poli-sci course. There was one book on totalitarianism. Maybe there was something dealing with the Vietnam War that

was part of my poli-sci readings. It's hard to remember exactly. But I do know that some of what I was reading influenced me and, quite frankly, I'm sure that the graduate student who was a TA in the recitation classes, as they were called, I'm sure that he had a point of view which probably was not well-hidden, and I think I was influenced largely by the anti-war views that were then circulating, as well as general news. The sentiment, I think, of most students, even then, was against the war. There were those who were for the war, but I think they were in the minority. Rutgers did not have, except for one incident, which I'll tell you about, in 1970, Rutgers was not a campus where I think there was very much in the way of violence. I did not experience that. At none of the demonstrations did I see anyone breaking windows or starting fires, with one exception. As I said, I think most students pretty much were interested in what was going on because the war certainly had an impact or could have an impact on their lives, but most of them were like most students anywhere who wanted to get through their classes and graduate.

SI: Running parallel, there was also the Black Student Movement during those years. Do you remember any protests on campus or actions on campus related to that cause?

BF: Yes, I do. I remember that we had had the riots not just in Newark but in other parts of the country in the '60s, so that certainly impacted attitudes with regard to civil rights during my college years. King was tragically assassinated in 1968 and then Robert F. Kennedy. So, that certainly had an effect. I remember that Black students were increasingly vocal while I was at Rutgers with their feeling that there needed to be some, as I recall this--I forget if this is what they called them--some remedial programs for those students who had come from disadvantaged educational backgrounds to help them so that they could do better educationally in college. I think that Rutgers was working with the Black students and faculty and others to try to reform some of the educational system at Rutgers. I remember talking to some Black students about it. There was a student named Gene Robinson, who was a leader of the Black movement, who was a real nice guy, very smart. We had a number of discussions. I really enjoyed talking to him, and I'm sorry I lost touch with him.

There was an attempt to reform the Rutgers curriculum, the Rutgers educational structure; it came out in something called the Susman-Gardner report you may have heard of. Warren Susman and Lloyd Gardner, who's still alive and who I only met about forty some odd years later at a program on the Vietnam War at the Vietnam War Memorial in Holmdel, New Jersey. At any rate, the two of them, who were history professors at Rutgers, created, I remember, a report--I may even have it still somewhere--recommending certain, I believe, structural changes. I don't know what happened to it. I don't know if any of them were accepted, but that gained a lot of interest on campus at the time. [Editor's Note: Warren Susman served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1960 until his death in 1985. In 1968, Susman produced a report entitled *The Reconstruction of an American College*, which came to be known as the "Susman Report" and called for the rethinking of higher education. The oral history of Lloyd Gardner, Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers, resides in the collection of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

SI: How did you run into Gene Robinson?

BF: I don't remember. I honestly don't. Maybe because he was more vocal, I remember that I thought of him as being moderate in terms of maybe others. Maybe "vocal" is not quite a good term, but he was articulate. He was rational. At least, I felt he was. I remember we didn't quite agree, and I don't remember what it was that we didn't agree on, but there was a lot that I agreed with him on. Like I said, aside from having a few discussions, maybe he spoke somewhere, and I went up to him afterwards and engaged him in some discussion, but he made an impression on me, one of my memories.

SI: I am also curious about the summers. What would you do when you weren't on campus?

BF: Let's see, what did I do when I wasn't on campus? Well, I probably spent a good bit of time down the Jersey Shore, like I had done in my high school years earlier. My mother and sisters still took apartments down the shore in Bradley Beach. What did I do? I must have had some job. It's funny, I can't remember exactly. One summer, I did work for some kind of internship program at Rutgers-Newark. What it had to do with? It had to do with--gee, it had to do something with civil rights. Yes, it had to do with something that was politically-oriented. I know some of it involved being at Rutgers-Newark because my mother still lived in Springfield, still had a home in Springfield, which made it easy for me to commute to Newark. But other than that, I'm sorry, I just don't have a clear memory of what transpired.

SI: Were you working at an office, or were you tutoring people?

BF: I wasn't tutoring. When I say an internship, that might not even be the correct word. It was a program. I just know I was working with other students. I know I'm not being very helpful, because it was so long ago. Gee, the students that I worked with, some of them were friends of mine, whom I haven't [been in touch] with for many, many years. I honestly can't recall exactly what I did. I just know that I did something, but I don't recall exactly what it was.

SI: I am thinking maybe a couple more questions, and then we will come back on Thursday and continue. The wind is whipping up here, and I am afraid we are going to lose some stuff. Were you involved in Hillel or any of the Jewish groups or activities on campus?

BF: I did go to some Hillel programs. I was not active in terms of any leadership or anything like that, no, but I did go. There were some programs that they had from time to time. Go ahead.

SI: Do you think there was any kind of prejudice, anti-Semitism at Rutgers at the time?

BF: I did not experience any. That's really all I can say. No, I don't have any memory of any anti-Semitism. Maybe there was, but nothing that was directed toward me or other Jewish students, as I can recall.

SI: Maybe a final question for this session, and then next time, I want to talk more about the political atmosphere and the last year with the shutdown. Before that year, had you had any contact or interactions with administrators at the university, deans or others on that level?

BF: I would say not. I remember there was a dean of men named Crosby, Howard Crosby, I think, but I didn't have any personal interactions with him. I remember Richard Schlatter was, I think, provost, whom I met many years later with my wife in Yugoslavia in 1972. [Editor's Note: Richard Schlatter, a history professor at Rutgers beginning in 1946, served as the provost and vice president at Rutgers from 1962 to 1971.]

SI: Oh, wow.

BF: I'd be happy to tell you about that. It was short encounter, very pleasant. We were on our honeymoon, by sheer happenstance, but so much of this happens that way. Part of our trip was spent on the Croatian Coast (part of our honeymoon) and we ran into him and his family on a small boat ferry from Dubrovnik to an island for a day trip. I think he may have told us that he was there to speak at a conference.

But, unfortunately, I never got to personally meet Mason Gross, although I certainly heard him speak both at Rutgers College and in law school in Camden, not long before he passed away from cancer. We can talk about that on Thursday if you'd like.

SI: Sure.

BF: As far as the administration, no; maybe I led a dull existence at Rutgers. [laughter]

SI: It was probably better that you didn't have any run-ins.

BF: Well, I observed a lot of interesting things going on. I was involved more, I would say, as probably as an observer and had an interest in subjects, poli-sci subjects and professors I liked who made an impact on me. But, no, I wasn't the leader in demonstrations. I wasn't a leader in any of the clubs, but I did enjoy my four years at Rutgers and then went on to law school and graduated there.

SI: All right.

BF: We can talk more on Thursday.

SI: Yes, I have more questions about Rutgers, and then we will talk about your law school experience and then a little bit about your career afterwards.

BF: Okay.

SI: For this session, thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

BF: Thank you, Shaun.

SI: I am going to stop the recording.

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

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