RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH BARRY FULMER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins the second interview with Barry Fulmer for the Class of 1970 Project at the Rutgers Oral History Archive. My name is Shaun Illingworth. I am in Hightstown, New Jersey. Mr. Fulmer, can you let us know where you are?

Barry Fulmer: I am in Fort Myers, Florida.

SI: Today's date is August 6, 2020.

BF: Yes, the seventy-fifth anniversary of the bombing of Hiroshima.

SI: Yes, that is true, absolutely. I wanted to begin asking a little bit more about the social and cultural happenings on campus during these critical years. One of the things that we often ask about are changes in dress, music, social mores, that sort of thing. You alluded to this the other day with your story about Barry Goldwater and how everyone was dressed in sport coats and dressed nicely for the lecture. When you look at the 1966 yearbook compared to the 1970 yearbook, you can see a clear change in a lot of things, such as hairstyles and clothes. How would you describe yourself at that time? Do you think you went through any changes like that during this period?

BF: Yes. I started off being much more conservative in my outlooks with regard to the world and in dress. That was a time also when being a hippie was an increasingly cool kind of thing. I wore bellbottom pants by the time I graduated. Certainly, a number of students, myself not excluded, tried various forms of psychedelic drugs, although I was not an acid (LSD) person. Marijuana was about the most that I ever tried and not that often. In terms of dress, yes, I think that dress became a little less--I don't know if formal is the right word--but it certainly did change. Students, male students in particular, were starting to grow their hair longer, not as short. The music, of course, pop music became very popular. Protest music became very popular, The Beatles, Peter Paul, and Mary, of course, Jefferson Airplane, Simon and Garfunkel, of course, et cetera. That was all just a part of the times and part of the "'60s". Culturally, I think that, in a nutshell, covers certainly what I observed and the scene that I was a part of at Rutgers. Are there some more questions that you wanted to ask with regard to '69 and '70?

SI: Well, leading up to that, going into your senior year, did you have an idea of what you wanted to do after you graduated? Did you have a sense of what your next step was after that year?

BF: I wasn't really sure. I believe I had taken my LSATs, so I decided to go to law school. I wasn't sure that I wanted to go into an academia career with poli-sci, so I never seriously considered going for an advanced degree in political science. So, I decided to go to law school. At that time, I wanted to do something that was socially beneficial, and I thought of law as being a way to possibly do that.

In September '69, I just want to add that I met my future wife, who is Douglass, Class of '72. We had a library date at the Douglass Library. It was a blind date, but that's when we first met then. We got married in '72. So, we've been married almost fifty years.

Let's see, I'm looking at my notes. Some other things that occurred--well, I don't know if I want to follow your questions and I'll respond to them, or do you want me to just talk in a stream of consciousness?

SI: Well, it is really however you want to do it. But just to follow up--you met on this blind date, but what would you do at the library, just study?

BF: No, she was a Douglass student, so that's where we decided to meet. It wasn't a study date. It was a meet and greet.

SI: Okay. We talked a little bit about how there was a lot of political activity on campus, a lot of groups like Students for a Democratic Society and others, but in terms of the 1968 election or maybe others, were you following those campaigns? Were you supporting anyone then?

BF: Yes, I supported Eugene McCarthy, especially after [Robert] Kennedy was assassinated. I wasn't active in the campaign. I didn't canvass or anything like that, but in terms of just being generally supportive, I considered myself in support of his anti-war position.

SI: What attracted you to Kennedy before McCarthy?

BF: Well, I don't remember if I supported Kennedy at the time. I'm trying to think back whether Kennedy was running, and I forget whether [Hubert] Humphrey was in the race then. I guess it was McCarthy and Kennedy, really. Humphrey came into the race late, I think--I could be wrong about this historically--after Kennedy was assassinated, but I certainly was sympathetic to Kennedy because of his civil rights views. He had come out against the war also, and he was young. He was younger. He represented a continuation of the idealism of his brother, JFK. So, certainly, I felt sympathy with him, and then it was a tragedy when he was killed in '68. [Editor's Note: On March 31, 1968, President Lyndon B. Johnson announced that he would not seek reelection. Vice President Hubert Humphrey announced his candidacy for the Democratic nomination on April 27 and did not compete in the primary elections. After winning the California primary and narrowly losing the New Jersey primary to Eugene McCarthy on June 4, Robert Kennedy was shot at the Ambassador Hotel in Los Angeles just after midnight on June 5. He died the next day. Humphrey secured the presidential nomination at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in August and lost in the general election to Richard Nixon.]

SI: People often talk about the Martin Luther King, Jr. assassination and the Kennedy assassination together, but obviously, they were separated by a few months. Do you remember what you were doing either day, your reaction, or the reaction of those around you?

BF: No, I think King was assassinated in April of '68, and I don't honestly remember what went on at campus, if there were demonstrations. I just don't. Kennedy was assassinated after the end of the second semester in '68. So, I didn't have contact with other students other than some friends, but I don't have any distinct recollection. I remember I was at home, and I woke up in the morning--I had gone to sleep earlier, I didn't stay up late the night of the California primary--and it was my grandmother who told me that Kennedy had been shot and killed. It was a shock. Obviously, it was a shock to the whole nation.

SI: Going forward to your senior year, by that point, the Vietnam War is white hot. We're at our maximum deployment of troops over there. Do you remember a palpable change in how people were reacting to the war, or was it similar to your earlier time at Rutgers?

BF: Well, I think that certainly the last semester of 1970, my last semester, was a culmination of everything that had gone on. As I'm sure you know, the University decided to cancel grades or just make it pass/fail for the last semester, and most of the professors complied with that. The one who didn't was--I think his name was Sidney Simon, Professor Simon. He was very conservative, and he disagreed. But most of the other faculty did go along with the change. I didn't feel there was any diminution in my education. I went to all my classes and passed them all. It didn't affect my future. The rationale behind canceling classes was actually to allow students, if they wanted, to partake in some of the political going-ons on campus. I mean, there were anti-war demonstrations. There were marches in downtown New Brunswick. So, obviously, it was a very tumultuous time. [Editor's Note: Following President Richard Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia, a student strike commenced at Rutgers and on campuses across the country in the beginning of May 1970. In solidarity with the National Strike, the Rutgers College faculty voted on Tuesday, May 5 to make classes and final exams optional and instituted pass/fail grades for the spring semester 1970. The faculty also voted to eliminate ROTC on campus the next year, though that was later reversed by the Board of Governors.]

What I thought, and I'm sure a lot of other students and people thought and it spoke very well of Rutgers, was that while there was some campus violence, even off-campus violence around the country, University of California, Berkeley, Columbia, for example, the police came on to campus. By the way, I had a friend at Rutgers, who had a brother who was a graduate student at Columbia at the time, and we were on the Columbia campus when it had been taken over by students and when the police came on to campus. Luckily, I was not injured when we all had to leave, but a number of students were.

At Rutgers, nothing like that ever happened, even after students took over Old Queens and occupied President Mason Gross's office. I remember, to his credit, that Mason Gross never called in the police, never called in the National Guard or the police, and handled things in a very laid-back way that I think gained the respect of the overwhelming majority of students and faculty and administrators at Rutgers. In my opinion, he was a great president, and sadly, he died, I think, in the early '70s from cancer. But, like I said, when the students took over his office, he peacefully vacated because he felt that it would blow over, and, in fact, it did, quite peacefully. The office, as far as I can remember, was not trashed, wasn't ransacked, nothing like that. There was no damage or nothing to speak of to Old Queens. The president and the administration handled it very well. [Editor's Note: The National Strike began at Rutgers on Friday, May 1. On Monday, May 4, two thousand protesters gathered on the Old Queens Campus, and Rutgers President Mason Gross addressed the crowd, calling the protesters his guests. That day, two hundred students occupied the second and third floors of Old Queens, including Gross' office, resulting in a two-day sit-in of Old Queens. On May 4 in Ohio, National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters and bystanders at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine. On May 5, massive demonstrations continued at Rutgers, and protests

and counter-protests continued for several weeks at Rutgers and on campuses across the nation. Mason Gross (1911-1977) served as the President of Rutgers University from 1959 to 1971.]

One thing I wanted to also mention about Mason Gross, which, I think, spoke very well of him--there was a film that was made during my last year about Rutgers. I don't remember the reason why. Maybe the administration wanted to, just in a turbulent time, try to portray Rutgers in a very positive way. There's one scene where Mason Gross is standing, I think it was, in front of the Commons and opposite from where the Student Center is that was completed in the mid-'60s after I started Rutgers. He's standing at the bus stop, obviously waiting for the campus bus. If the film is around, you should see it. The bus pulls up to where he is. He's the only one standing there. The door to the bus opens. He's about to get on the bus. The door closes, and the bus takes off. He just stood there looking perplexed but with a peaceful shrug, but to me--obviously, it was all planned and it was done in a very lighthearted way. It was as if the bus driver pulled up and thought, "Oh, who's this guy? No, I don't want to take him. I'm going to go on." But it wasn't a putdown of Mason Gross. It just showed how humble he was. Like I said, he didn't get angry. He didn't run after the bus. It was just representative of the kind of person he was. Again, I often think well of him when I think back to my years at Rutgers.

The one incident, and I did allude to it in our last session, where there was violence at Rutgers was when the Students for a Democratic Society, SDS, which was a more radical group--I was not a part of it because I didn't agree with some of their ideas, some of their methods--as far as I remember, they burned down the ROTC building. That was the one time where there was something violent that went on. But, again, the police weren't called in. It wasn't like Kent State, nothing like that. The campus police dealt with it. The administration dealt with it in a very calm manner. They didn't try to aggravate or cause the situation to get out of control. It was the only violent incident that occurred. I remember, too, and I mentioned Kent State, that right after the shooting at Kent State, which was fifty years ago last May, there were some students from Kent State who traveled to campuses around the country and they traveled to Rutgers and some of them spoke at Rutgers. I remember sitting outside, I guess, in the back of Old Queens, facing toward Willie the Silent in the distance, but there were hundreds and hundreds of students that were sitting there and waiting to hear what students from Kent State had to say. [Editor's Note: In December 1969, two Molotov cocktails were thrown at the Rutgers Army ROTC Building, causing slight damage. Members of Students for a Democratic Society (SDS) were implicated in the bombing. A fire in April 1972 caused severe damage to the building.]

I remember at graduation, there was a ceremony first around Willie the Silent, and you did have at least one person who had been a member of the "Chicago Seven" or eight--one of the attorneys, Leonard Weinglass--he was one of the trials of antiwar demonstrators, as you may recall. I think the trial was in Chicago. So, he came and spoke. [Editor's Note: The Chicago Seven refers to the seven defendants, including Youth International Party founders Abbie Hoffman and Jerry Rubin, who were charged with conspiracy to incite riots at the Democratic National Convention in Chicago in 1968. Leonard Weinglass and William Kunstler served as the defense attorneys.]

Then, at the main graduation ceremonies in the stadium, William Cahill was the governor at the time, and he was giving the keynote address. I remember a number of students, a number of us, stood up and just turned around and faced away from him out of protest, where there was some reform that he was not supporting at Rutgers. I don't remember the exact issue, but I know there was something that a lot of us felt very strongly about and that we felt that Cahill was just wrong about. Maybe he made some comments about demonstrators. I just don't recall. But that was one of my last recollections about what went on in that last semester at Rutgers. Those were my major recollections from the last semester.

SI: Going back to the fire at the ROTC building, was that something you heard about or read about later, or did it cause a commotion on campus that everyone was aware of it pretty quickly?

BF: I wasn't there when the fire was. Maybe the next day, I walked by. You could walk by and see that the building had been burned. It wasn't a huge building, but it had been burned. There were students that were walking around, milling around. I don't recall there being any demonstrations around it. Certainly, there was no follow up. I don't recall SDS or any other students trying to torch any other buildings or cause any other damage at Rutgers. I think the ire was focused on ROTC because of what it represented to so many students. By the way, I had considered ROTC in my freshman year at Rutgers, and I decided not to. But that wasn't because of the war. That was because I just felt that I needed to devote all my energies to my studies.

SI: Recently, there has been a lot of celebration of Paul Robeson as an alum. I am sure you know something of the history and his relationship with Rutgers. That change of Rutgers trying to distance itself from Robeson to then acknowledging him begins in this era. I am just curious if, as a student, you were aware of Robeson and that he had gone to Rutgers. Was there anything on campus that brought your attention to that?

BF: Well, yes, he was a well-known figure. We know that he had played Rutgers football. I think he went later on for a graduate degree at Princeton, if I recall. But he was well known. By that time, he was ill. I believe he was fairly ill, so I never saw him in person. I think that his son may have come to and spoken at Rutgers, but certainly, everyone knew who Paul Robeson was and that despite his being to the Soviet Union, I think that there was a lot of understanding that was because of the racial discrimination and harassment that he suffered. A lot of people were very sympathetic to things that were going on in the Soviet Union back in the '30s, '40s, what have you, and the world did not know all the terrible excesses of the Stalinist authoritarian government then. So, it wasn't held against Robeson by many of us. Whether he was a Communist or not, and he certainly may have been, that didn't have a big impact on me because I understood if he was, the reasons why. He was a great person. He was certainly a great singer, a great opera singer. I have one of his recordings. He contributed so much to Rutgers. The student center is now named after him, it's the Robeson Student Center?

SI: The student center at the Newark campus is, yes. Last year, they dedicated a plaza to him at the New Brunswick Campus.

BF: Yes.

SI: During that last year, during the strike period, do you remember what you did? Were you still on campus, or did you go home or do something else?

BF: Well, I lived off campus, I think on Guilden [Street]. I don't remember the exact name. It was about two blocks from the gymnasium, but I didn't live in the dorms anymore as a senior. So, I had roommates. I didn't live at home. As to a "strike period," I wouldn't call what occurred a strike because students were not striking from going to classes. Students went to classes, but the pressure of having to study or worry about grades was removed so that students could "contemplate" and be involved in some of the political activities. I'm not going to judge it. I spoke of this before. I'm sure there are some people who were very critical of it, and you can argue it back and forth, but there was a lot to learn from that period. I don't think my education suffered. Like I said, I went to all of my classes, even if they were pass/fail, which meant that you had to get at least a "C" in order to be considered a pass on the course. Most of the students that I knew were still going to classes. So, I wouldn't call it--maybe other people might call it a strike, but I didn't consider it a strike.

SI: You also mentioned last time going to several protest marches and actions, and you also seemed to have gone to a couple of talks, like this talk by the Kent State students. Do you remember going anywhere else off campus for any kind of activity, like down to D.C. or into New York?

BF: In '69, to go back a little bit--January of 1969 was Nixon's inauguration. I had a friend at Rutgers who was a history major. I remember that we traveled down to the inauguration. He had a brother who lived--I'm really pulling this out of my memory right now--I remember he had a brother who lived in Baltimore. So, we stayed over with his brother for about two days or so, two or three days, and decided to go to Nixon's inauguration. At Nixon's inauguration, there were some antiwar demonstrations that I think went on at that time in Washington that we may have observed. We weren't active in planning or anything like that, even though our sentiments were antiwar. But other than that, no, I didn't do anything off campus.

SI: Is there anything else about that last year that comes to mind when you think of that period? You mentioned some of the highlights, but when you think back to that period, what do you think about the most?

BF: I think of all of it. It all certainly had an impact on me as it did on many others. It crystallized my views with regard to politics, with regard to social attitudes that have remained to this day. One other thing I didn't mention, and it did occur off campus in '69, it had nothing to do with Rutgers directly, but I might mention [was the draft lottery]. I did not get drafted, although I had a low draft number. So, you may ask, "Well, if I had a low draft number, what did I do?" I didn't go to Canada, and I didn't, like some students did when they had to go to their physical, put egg all over them, or God knows what some of them did. [Editor's Note: The first Vietnam draft lottery took place during the senior year of the Class of 1970. On December 1, 1969, the U.S. Selective Service held the draft lottery, which was broadcast live on television and radio. The lottery selected birthdays to determine the order in which men born between 1944 and 1950 were called to report for induction in 1970 during the Vietnam War. October

28th, Barry Fulmer's date of birth, was drawn at position 94. Those with the lower numbers were more apt to be called first.]

I had an orthopedist, and I guess he wasn't very sympathetic toward the Vietnam War effort by the government. I had X-rays done, and he found certain orthopedic characteristics, let's say, with regard to calcium and certain joints, all that sort of thing. He said to me--and I must not have been the only young man whom he had examined at that time who might have had a low draft number as well--he said, "I've gotten all the regulations, the guidelines, that you need to pass in order to pass your Army physical, and I don't think that you can pass them with these X-rays and the examination. I'll write you a letter, give you X-rays if you need."

I applied to the Army Reserves because a lot of students had, thinking the Army Reserve was not going to get called up. It was a safer bet than being drafted. If you got in the Army Reserve, you got off the draft list. But I took the X-rays, and I took my doctor's report, and when I showed it to the doctor at the Army Reserve physical in Newark, he looked at all the documentation they had and he said, "Goodbye, I'm not going to pass you," and that was that. So, I had, of course, a report from the Army Reserve turning me down. The standards for regular Army and Army Reserve were the same. So, I thought, "Well, when I go for my regular Army physical," which I would then have to have gone to, "the chances are I should be turned down also." In fact, that's what happened. About a month or two later, I was called to go to my regular Army physical in Newark. I think it was in '69, and I failed that also. So, I was 4-F or whatever the designation was, and that's why I did not go into the war, which was good.

SI: I would imagine that must have been a frequent source of conversation at an all-male college at that period. Do you remember that being a source of either just conversation or stress for your classmates?

BF: Well, sure. Obviously, a lot of us were faced with the possibility of being drafted. Those who were, and there were some who were in ROTC who probably went over to Vietnam, the draft was constantly a topic. I honestly don't recall those students whom I knew who may have been drafted. I lost touch with a number of them afterward, and I wound up going into law school right after I graduated from Rutgers College. I can't say, other than general attitudes against American involvement in Vietnam, that there were a lot of concerns that I heard, a lot of concerns about the war. Maybe other students whom I knew, maybe most of them had a higher draft number. Maybe they had other reasons for getting an exemption. I don't know. I'm trying to think if I knew anybody who applied for conscientious objector status, and I just don't recall. Maybe one. I don't know anyone who went to Canada. There certainly may have been some. I can't recall. I just don't have a clear recollection of any of that.

SI: Well, at any time, if you remember anything about your undergraduate years, just feel free to add. As you just said, you went right to Camden for law school. Why did you choose Camden?

BF: Because I got in, and it was inexpensive. I don't remember where else I applied. I may have applied to Newark, but Camden was inexpensive. There was a new--well, they were building a new law school building there. It wasn't completed when I started in the fall of 1970,

but it was a relatively newer school, certainly newer than Newark, and that's where I got accepted. So, that's where I went.

SI: How much of an adjustment was it going to law school? Did you feel like you were well prepared for it, or was it difficult that first year?

BF: I found the first year difficult. It was like having to learn a new language in a way. Maybe I should have taken off a year before I went because I did take off a year later on. I found the first year difficult, and so I took off the second year. I got a civil service job in state government. My wife and I got married in June of '72. We went to Europe and Israel for about eleven weeks. There were monetary discounts you could get if you were a student, and we were actually able to travel to and through Europe incredibly inexpensively. It cost us almost nothing, and we looked like two hippies hiking and driving a VW [Volkswagen] Beetle across Europe. We took a ship travel class to Israel for three weeks. My wife had some family members [there]. It was one of the greatest experiences of our lives.

When I came back from our trip, I went back to law school, and something clicked. I don't understand what it was. Maybe I was a little more mature, but I did a lot better in law school in the last two years than I had in the first year. There were cases in other subsequent courses that I had to study again, and somehow, they seemed clearer to me. I understood them better. Maybe that happens with people. You're not ready for it for whatever reason, and you mature and you have a better understanding. Anyway, I did better.

When I was in law school, during the summers, I worked. One summer, I worked for legal services because that was my inclination. I worked for Philadelphia Legal Services at one point in between years at Rutgers. I don't know what more else. Go ahead.

SI: Yes, I have a few questions. First, do any of your professors stand out from Camden?

BF: I had a professor, I think his name was (Ferrer?). It was "International Studies." That was very interesting. I'm trying to think. If I can think of someone, I'll let you know. I did take a "Philosophy of Law" course with a professor who was a southerner and I only say southerner because he had a heavy southern accent, and it introduced me to looking at the law from different perspectives. I also remember being very influenced by my "Constitutional Law" course as giving me a legal basis for understanding how so many of our civil rights are based on Constitutional legal principles. I do remember at graduation, there was a Black woman activist who spoke, Florynce? [Editor's Note: Mr. Fulmer was referring to Florynce Kennedy, a civil rights activist and lawyer.] I don't remember her last name--very good speaker. I think she was an attorney, and she was the keynote speaker at my law school graduation in Camden. I remember that. To me, that was noteworthy. Can we turn this off? I'm going to stop for a moment.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: You were just telling me a story about when Dean Rusk was invited to come to the Camden Law School.

BF: Yes, yes. A professor at the Rutgers School of Law in Camden had a very close relationship with former Secretary of State Dean Rusk, who, of course, had been Secretary of State under John F. Kennedy and Lyndon Johnson during the Vietnam War, and who was known, rightly or wrongly, as being a hawk on the war and supportive of U.S. government policy at the time. This professor, Professor Milner Ball, had invited him to speak. I had previously taken a class with Professor Ball, had done very well in the class, aced the class as I recall, and liked the professor very much. But this professor in my senior year at Rutgers Camden Law had decided that only students who were members of an international law club on campus would be allowed to attended Rusk's speaking at Rutgers Camden Law. A number of students disagreed with that decision of Professor Ball's and made their views known to him. I approached him myself, feeling that it was important because of Dean Rusk's historic role during the war, very recent role during the war, and being such a well-known international figure, that it was important to at least allow the Rutgers community, certainly the law school students and other faculty, to peacefully attend and hear what Dean Rusk had to say. I went to see Professor Ball, and he disagreed vehemently. I didn't find any of his reasons to be meritorious. I was very, very disappointed. I left, and I did not get to see or hear Dean Rusk speak. So, it was a somewhat disappointing happening at Rutgers Camden when I was there, for me at least, and I think for other people, too.

SI: Was there any kind of student activism at Rutgers Law. Most people say there is not as much because of the workload. Do you remember anything?

BF: What stands out in my mind was one day, and I don't remember whether it was the first year, second year, or third year at Rutgers, but at one point, Jane Fonda was coming to speak on campus. Jane Fonda, whether you like her, whether you don't like her, whether some people agreed with her or not, she was certainly a noteworthy figure at the time and is still alive. She came to speak outside, I think, at one of the ball fields at Rutgers Camden campus. I, and a number of other students, or a lot of students, maybe faculty, too, took off from class and went to hear her speak. So, there were certainly antiwar feelings, even among law students then, because the war was still going on.

SI: In terms of your studies, did you find yourself gravitating towards a certain area, or was it a standard curriculum that you had to get through?

BF: I'd have to pull out my transcript. I don't remember. I remember I took a seminar, probably one of the first seminars on environmental law, although it isn't something that I eventually went into. That was interesting. Just from what I recall, I had positive vibes about it, but I don't recall that much in terms of whether there was a specific area that I wanted to go into. Of course, you had certain prerequisites; you had to take certain courses, certain areas. Law schools may have changed the prerequisites from what they were back then. No, I don't recall taking courses that I thought were an area of law that I wanted to practice in. I had still not settled on subject area goals.

SI: During that gap year, you said you worked for the state government. What did you do there?

BF: I worked in [what] was called the Department of Institutions and Agencies, which has gone under many iterations since then. But the part that I worked with had to do with welfare, public assistance. It was a civil service position. I reviewed welfare grants that were given to people and their families under different classifications. I would go to their homes and review eligibility and assistance amounts with them. It was required to make sure that they still qualified for the kind of public assistance program that they were on.

SI: I am curious. That was still during the Governor William Cahill years.

BF: Yes. He was governor, I think, from '69 to '73. It's easy to remember when New Jersey governors get elected because it's always the year after the presidential election. [Editor's Note: Republican William T. Cahill defeated former governor Robert B. Meyner in the gubernatorial election in 1969, serving as New Jersey's governor from 1970 to 1974.]

SI: I am curious if you thought there were efforts to cut back on welfare or find reasons to kick people off while you were working there?

BF: I don't recall. I think that Cahill, whatever disagreements students may have had at the time of the graduation in 1970 with him, was a different kind of Republican than what you see today. My recollection is he was a moderate. It's New Jersey, and Republicans tended to be more moderate than perhaps in other parts of the country as time developed over the last forty-some-odd years. So, I don't recall them taking any steps to try to limit or cut back on monies for public assistance. I could be wrong, but I don't recall, except that the policy of the agency was to apply guidelines and laws as they were written. I never was told to try to limit those who were receiving public assistance.

SI: Also, with your experiences with legal services, do any memories stand out of cases you worked, experiences or people you met?

BF: No, not really. Just to gain sympathy and legal rights for people who could not afford representation, whether it was child custody cases, family law cases, landlord-tenant in particular. You gain an appreciation for how important it is in so many areas that people do have representation and how people who can't afford representation often are denied rights and equal treatment under the law. I guess that's what I drew out of those experiences.

SI: Your honeymoon in Europe and Israel, are there any memories of that that come to mind?

BF: Oh, geez. A lot. As I said before, it was wonderful. Europeans were just so nice to us. Here we are, two young Americans. The Vietnam War is not very popular in Europe. It's June, July, August 1972. The war is still going on. But I guess when they saw us, we didn't have people give us a hard time about the war because we were two young Americans in our early twenties. Maybe they thought that we were sympathetic against the war, as were so many, many Europeans.

One happening that occurred, and I will tell you because I still choke up about it, so my wife and I were driving into what was then Czechoslovakia, and it was under a Communist government,

1972. The Dubcek revolution, the Prague Spring, had failed in '68, and the Soviets and the Warsaw Pact invaded Czechoslovakia. [Editor's Note: The Prague Spring refers to the liberal reforms instituted by Alexander Dubček in Communist-controlled Czechoslovakia in 1968. In August 1968, the Soviet Union and Warsaw Pact nations invaded Czechoslovakia and reinstated the authoritarian wing of the Communist Party of Czechoslovakia, which continued to rule until the fall of Communism in Central and Eastern Europe in 1989.]

So, [it was] '72, and [Czechoslovakia had] a Communist government. We wanted to visit Czechoslovakia because my wife's parents had been born between the two world wars in what was then Czechoslovakia. She wanted to see part of the country. So, we drove into what was Bohemia, the very western end of Czechoslovakia. We approached the border in Austria; there was barbed wire next to the Austrian side. We then had to drive three miles through a demilitarized area. It was very, very strange. You get to, I guess, customs, whatever you want to call it, on the Czech government side. We were very fortunate. We didn't have much on us, which is to say, we were two young Americans with minimal luggage, passports and visas (they were necessary to have to get into the Iron Curtain) and driving a Volkswagen Beetle (when they were still made with air-cooled engines in the rear). We were not bothered by the Czech border officials.

So, we crossed into Czechoslovakia, Bohemia, and we're driving north. A few miles into the country, a soldier with a rifle, not pointed at us, on his shoulder, walks across the road and stops us. We said to each other, "Oh, my God, what did we do?" [laughter] He stops us because he has two people with him, a husband and wife, who were visiting their children in a summer camp a few miles up the road and had taken a walk and needed a ride back to the camp, and would we give them a ride in our little VW Beetle that we had rented in Amsterdam a few weeks before? What are we going to say? Of course, we said yes. But for all we knew, they could have been government agents who were instructed to try to find out what these two young Americans, purporting to be tourists, were really up to. So, we picked them up and dropped them off. They said to us--let me think now. The wife did not speak any English. The husband spoke maybe a little English, and my wife, who spoke enough Yiddish [that] could pass for German, was able to converse with the husband. It turned out that he was a doctor at a hospital in Prague. So, he said, "When you're in Prague, come stay with us because our children are in summer camp. You're welcome to stay with us." We're total strangers. We're young. My hair is down to here (shoulders). My wife had long hair at the time. They didn't know us from a hole in the wall. "Okay, fine," we tell them. He gives us his address, but he says, "Before you come to us, if you come directly to us, you have to show on your passport where you stayed and all that sort of thing. So that we don't get into trouble, there's a campground a few miles outside Prague. You can register there. It's very inexpensive. Register for however many nights, and then you can come back and stay with us, so that if any government officials, police, whoever, look at your passport, they'll think that you stayed there."

That's what we wound up doing, although, on our way, we stopped at a medieval town called Telc, which is south of Prague, and we decided to stay there. We didn't like the hotel that we were going to check into, and we went to a restaurant and sat and had a meal. This fellow comes over to us, and I guess, between his German and my wife's Yiddish, they conversed, and he said, "Oh, you need a place to stay? Why don't you stay in my house, here in Telc?" He was a truck

driver who worked on a farm. "My wife and grown daughter are there, and you can stay there. I have to work overnight," he said. And we did. I mean, it was incredible. We were treated like family. It was wonderful. It was absolutely wonderful. The next day, the daughter, who was about our age, was a college student, gave us a tour of the local castle (built in the late 1300s). Unfortunately, the two languages that the tour were in were Russian and Czech, neither of which we understood, but it was nice going along with the tour, with all these Czech and Russian-speaking or understanding tourists.

Then, we left, and we went to Prague, registered in the campground first, immediately left, and then went to the doctor and his wife in Prague, in their apartment, and stayed with them for several days. They acted as tour planners for us, and they were just absolutely wonderful and took us all over Prague. The only thing they asked of us was they said, "When you get back to the United States, could you send us something with a peace sign on it?" That's what they wanted. They were obviously very well educated, western-oriented Czechs who couldn't wait for the Russian influence to leave. Of course, they couldn't say that, but you got the message very quickly. Wonderful, wonderful, human beings.

When we got home, I did find something in a store and mailed it to them. I don't know if they ever got it. I don't know if the mail was opened by communist government agents. It may have been. I don't know what happened to them. I tried writing to them, and then I never heard from them. But the Czech experience stood out as one of our great experiences during that trip. The Czechs were and are such great people. That was wonderful.

SI: You mentioned last time that you also went to Yugoslavia. Were those the only two Communist countries that you went to?

BF: From Czechoslovakia, we went back to Vienna. After Prague, we went to Vienna because we had to drop the car off, the little VW Beetle that we traveled in for four weeks. We traveled into Yugoslavia, first Slovenia, by train. We also stopped at Split, which was an ancient Roman city, a lot of ruins, in Croatia. Oh, this is a very interesting experience. So, we stopped in Split. People have signs all over, they had signs then. In German, it was "*Zimmer frei*," room available for the night. We found a room in the town of Split. The woman who owned the [house] had a daughter who was a law student, as a matter of fact. When they found out we were Americans--it turns out they had a houseguest who was a violinist, and we met him--he started playing "Yankee Doodle." It was very, very cute. The woman who owned the house did our laundry for us. She over-laundered a little bit. She took a dress of my wife's, and she must have used water that was very, very hot, and whatever detergent she used, changed the color of it, and shortened it by a few inches. When she finished it, she smiled at us and said, "See how clean?" She didn't speak English, but through other languages, we were able to converse with her.

The other experience I think I referred to the other day was when we met--I don't remember if he was provost, but he was like provost at Rutgers, Richard Schlatter. [Editor's Note: Richard Schlatter served as a history professor, chair of the History Department (1955-1960), and provost and vice president at Rutgers (1962-1971).] Dubrovnik, which is an ancient walled city on the Dalmatian Croatian coast, we wanted to see Dubrovnik. We stayed in a home outside of Dubrovnik that we just happened to find after we got off the bus that took us down to Dubrovnik.

There's a small passenger ferry from Dubrovnik to an island, Lokrum, we wanted to visit a few miles off the coast. I had a snorkeling mask. It's like the Caribbean in a lot of ways. On the boat, I recognized him--by the way, this is 1972--Richard Schlatter. Apparently, he was there for some conference. He was there with his wife. I think he had a son and a daughter-in-law. So, they were there as a family, and I started talking to him. It was a very unusual connection. Oh, I did meet a Rutgers sociology professor in Carcassonne, France, earlier in Europe, during our trip, too. What coincidences! Anyway, Richard Schlatter was on the boat. I said hello, had a chat. Again, he was with his family. I don't know what the nature of the conference was that he was at. I didn't want to ask too many questions, but that was kind of a strange coincidence. Unfortunately, I think a few years later, he contracted cancer. It was very, very tragic. So, those are the kinds of things that stood out in my mind.

SI: You came back and finished law school in 1974. What was your next move once you graduated from law school?

BF: Well, again, I'm trying to recall. Let's see, I don't know if I put everything down on my resume. I'm sure there are a lot of things that I left out, because there's just so many things. I eventually got a position clerking for a Superior Court judge, Paul Lowenthal, a matrimonial court judge in Camden. I did that for a year, '74-'75.

After I finished clerking for him, I found a position working for a prepaid legal service program, which I did for ten years, managing at first two offices and then one, because of a move that I made representing members of a nursing home workers union that was based in New York City but did have nursing home workers in New Jersey. So, it was kind of a legal service program, but specifically for members of this union, representing them because it was more of a consumer-oriented practice, which I preferred at the time because it was a way of using my legal skills to help people who would not otherwise be able to afford legal assistance. I did some real estate, residential real estate, a lot of landlord-tenant cases, some Truth in Lending cases under federal law, bankruptcy, usually straight bankruptcy, Chapter 7, maybe some Chapter 13 wage earner plans, that sort of thing.

SI: That was all through the prepaid legal services company.

BF: Yes.

SI: What did you find most interesting or challenging about that job?

BF: Challenging? [It was] challenging in terms of just trying to get just results for my clients, like, for example, defending them in eviction proceedings or filing a bankruptcy action, getting them out of debts that they [incurred], through no fault of their own, because of the circumstances they found themselves in. These were low-income workers, I mean, nursing aides and people like that. They certainly weren't highly paid. They had their own economic problems and their own difficulties in their lives. So, it was simply a challenge in trying to help relieve them, at least get some of the legal issues that were causing them distress, causing them economic problems, causing them to maybe be evicted from their apartments when they

shouldn't have been. I was able to help them in that regard. Yes, it was a challenge to do that, but it was also rewarding when I was able to accomplish things for clients.

SI: That took you up to about the mid-'80s.

BF: Yes. After that, for a few years, I found out about a position with the state attorney general's office, and I became a deputy attorney general for five years. I worked in the area representing actually the prison system, the parole board, and then the child welfare agency, the Division of Youth and Family Services, handling child abuse and neglect cases. So, I did that for a few years, and then I went back into private practice with a law firm in Newark. Actually, most of the time I was there, I was representing members of a building workers' union based in New York City, [Service Employees International Union, Local] 32BJ. That I did out of a law firm in Newark for about ten years, representing, again, low to moderate-income workers in the same areas of law that I had done for the nursing home workers union prepaid legal service plan.

Subsequent to that, I was offered a position as in-house counsel in the Department of Treasury's Division of Taxation in the State of New Jersey, and I did that up until my retirement in 2012. I did work helping to draft statutes and regulations. I did a lot of work in the area of farmland assessment because the Division of Taxation was involved with farmland assessment regulations. One of the things that I noted in my resume and I was very proud of is that I was able to become in charge of implementing the Civil Union Act, the one that was passed in New Jersey. That was before same-sex marriage came into effect. I revised a lot of state tax returns forms so that they would be in accordance with and comply with the Civil Union Act that was passed. I felt strongly about that. I have a gay son. Then, of course, when the State Supreme Court ruled in favor of same-sex marriage, that decision superseded the Civil Union Act.

Then, in 2012, I retired, and my wife retired also. We gradually made the move down here to Florida. We sold our home in New Jersey about three years ago, in Freehold Township, and we've been here ever since. Now, I have to find things to do in retirement, which I'm actually able to do, some of which makes use of some of the things that I did in the past.

SI: I am not sure I heard correctly, but did you have two stints with the state attorney general's office?

BF: One. When I worked for the Department of Treasury, Division of Taxation, it was basically in-house legal counsel with other attorneys, but we weren't DAGs.

SI: Before that, you were working for five years doing the DYFS work. What was the other area you mentioned?

BF: Prison system. I represented the prison system, inmates. A lot of inmates liked to--I shouldn't say "liked to"--a lot of inmates would litigate cases under 42 U.S.C. Section 1983, which is the major federal civil rights statute, alleging all sorts of violations of their civil rights. Most of the cases--and I mean most, ninety percent plus--were without merit under the law, but it was the responsibility of the attorney general's office, Division of Law, to represent the state, in this case the prison system, concerning those federal cases, federal litigation.

SI: When you were doing the Division of Youth and Family Services cases, what would be the nature of your role there?

BF: We would be representing the agency, going into court on cases where a child or children were removed from parents or guardians and you needed a court order for removal. If children were removed from the parents, then the case would be reviewed periodically. The goal was to reunite--I think it still is--try to reunite children with the parents, assuming that the parents showed certain progress in being able to overcome what it was that caused the children to be removed from them within a year. If the children were not removed within a year, then the agency began termination proceedings, which could result in adoption of the children who had been placed in foster care or with another family member who could take care of them who was responsible. I didn't deal with termination cases. That was another part of the AG's office that dealt with that. I just dealt with situations where there were removals and reviews of cases involving removal of children before it got to the possibility of termination with the hope, again, that parents would go for certain services, psychological and all that sort of thing, drug treatment, whatever the agency, the Division of Youth and Family Services, felt was needed to try to get the parents to be able to safely and responsibly take care of their children again.

SI: It seems like most of your jobs, both in the public sector and the private sector, dealt with services for the less fortunate or labor-type relations. Was that something you sought out, or once you had experience in one area, you kept getting jobs based on that experience?

BF: Yes, I guess because of my social views, I was never interested in becoming a corporate lawyer and taking that route. It didn't interest me, so I never pursued that possibility. Maybe if I hadn't gone to law school, maybe I would have gone to get an MSW [Master of Social Work]. Maybe I would have done that. I have very good friends who are MSWs to this day, who I actually met when I worked for the Division of Youth and Family Services. Who knows? Maybe I could have done something else with myself. I did law because I thought that was a way to try to make the world better in some way. Not always successful. In some cases, I think there were some successes. Outside of law, I also listed certain activities that I did over the years as well.

SI: Were those more like community action type things?

BF: Yes. I've listed several of them. Just very quickly, in the 1990s, I was a plaintiff in an ACLU [American Civil Liberties Union] suit against the Monmouth County Board of Freeholders with regard to separation of church and state. I think the case was settled. I don't remember what the settlement was. I was one of three plaintiffs.

I also was active with school boards in my town and involved with redistricting issues. I was on a citizen task force regarding redistricting issues, the possible building of a new high school in 1998. Before that, I was also involved at the elementary school level in my township on a committee that advised the school district on space needs in the public schools. I was also very interested, because I'm an avid recreational bicyclist, in serving on the county citizens advisory

committee called the Monmouth County Transportation Council, and they needed someone who would represent bicycling interests. So, I volunteered to be on that for a few years.

I was also involved with helping to start an organization. I don't know if you know of it. It's a national organization. It was founded well over, I think, thirty years ago--Parents, Families, and Friends of Lesbians and Gays [PFLAG]. There was a chapter starting in Central Jersey back in the early 2000s, 2003-2004. I remember going to a program where the mother of Matthew Shephard spoke--I don't know if you know who Matthew Shephard was. He was a gay person who was killed, was brutally murdered in Laramie, Wyoming twenty-some-odd years ago, and his mother came to speak about her son and the aftermath of his murder. So, my wife and I helped start this PFLAG chapter, which is a support group basically, in Toms River, New Jersey. We were active in it for about ten years before we moved down here. Let's see, there was other various work I've listed on my resume that had to do with LGBT issues, speaking on LGBT issues, and being a part of a forum. I spoke at a conference dealing with the drafting by the New Jersey Legislature of an anti-bullying anti-harassment law. I think that, in a nutshell, covers some of the things that I did on the outside.

SI: Yes, I want to follow up on some of those.

BF: I don't want to mislead you or mislead anybody who may see this. I wouldn't characterize myself as a social activist. I wasn't extremely outspoken. That wasn't my approach. I tried to help out where I could, offer some thoughts, suggestions as to the best ways to go or how one could be helpful in trying to accomplish some of the goals that I wanted to see accomplished. But I wasn't an Abbie Hoffman or someone like that in the '60s. [laughter] That just wasn't me. But I was certainly involved in those causes and those issues that I felt strongly about.

SI: I wanted to see if you can say a little more about the ACLU case you were involved in. What was the nature of the church and state separation issue you were trying to tackle?

BF: The case involved the placing of a nativity scene and menorah in the plaza area right in front of the Hall of Records, which was a main county administration building in downtown Freehold Borough, which was the county seat of Monmouth County. The ACLU, at the time, felt very strongly that it was a separation of church and state issue, the county allowing to have clear religious symbols be placed in the public square. There were several of us who felt very strongly that it was inappropriate. It didn't matter what your religion was. It didn't matter what the religious symbol was. While a menorah meant a lot to me from a personal religious perspective, I didn't think that it was the place of government to have it in the public square, any more than having a nativity scene should be in the public square. Year after year, the county would do that, and the local synagogue, as well as some other Jewish organizations, I think wrongly wanted to have a menorah put up there too. So, that was the nature of the litigation.

There was a volunteer attorney who led the case. I think what happened was that, during the case, the U.S. Supreme Court came out with a decision which changed the law a little bit, and I think it was brought by--maybe it was the Ku Klux Klan that wanted to put up a cross in Georgia or some other county or state government building, outside the building, and the local government had allowed other religious groups to put up whatever they wanted, but not the Klan.

The Supreme Court said, if I recall correctly, that if the government is going to allow one religious group to put up its symbol or whatever it wanted to in the public square, so to speak, then it had to allow anybody to do that. If the county was going to allow one, then it had the right to allow others. I think my case was settled, but I don't remember exactly what happened because the attorney left, who was leading the case, and the person who was over him--it was awful--died of pancreatic cancer at a very young age. So, I don't know what happened with the litigation. I think the ACLU was trying to negotiate that just a small area in the public plaza in front of the building could be used for religious displays. I don't recall. But that was the nature of the litigation.

SI: Your work with the parent's groups, you described it partially as a support group, but were there specific issues that you tried to organize around or affect change on?

BF: Well, the nature of the support group was simply meeting with, talking with other parents who had gay children, and also to give support to a number of gay children in the community, who came to our meetings because it was a safe place for them to be. We had contacts with other support groups. I think [we] tried to strengthen other support groups just by making them aware of our presence. Also, we started off as mainly a gay support organization, but as we became more aware of transgender issues and discovered there were transgender individuals in our area, our chapter opened up a transgender support group as well. But if you're asking did we demonstrate in support of any particular issue, generally, it was just seeking recognition, acceptance, tolerance, equality for LGBT people. Our chapter did participate in demonstrations. Asbury Park, as you may know, has, for many years, had a gay pride celebration. I think it was every June. Up until a few years ago, when we moved down here, we would go to a march through part of Asbury Park, and our chapter was part of it and we were part of it also. I think that over the years support that we gave the people certainly has helped a lot of them gain self-assurance and so helped a lot of gay people and a lot of other parents see that they were not alone, which was the most important message that I think that we could give to others. So, it was a very rewarding experience.

SI: The anti-bullying legislation that you were involved with, was that tied to the group, or was it more independent?

BF: No, no. It was a state commission that was hired to get input from a lot of different sectors of the society on what should be proposed to the Legislature. I was just speaking as a citizen, someone who had done a little research maybe into anti-harassment, anti-bullying laws. I just went to one meeting and spoke up. I think my remarks were transcribed. Ultimately, the legislature took that and a lot of other sources and put together an anti-bullying law, which is still in effect, I believe, in New Jersey in the schools, it set up some very strict guidelines for the schools, how to handle harassment situations, bullying situations, complaints, hearings, that sort of thing.

SI: I am curious. Were you involved in the legal profession, the Bar Association, that sort of thing?

BF: No. I did not become involved. I did belong just as a general member of the ABA [American Bar Association], I think, and the New Jersey Bar Association. I paid my dues, but, no, I was not active with them.

SI: Is there anything else from your working life that we skipped over or that you want to talk about?

BF: I don't think so. I think that pretty much covers it. If there is something else, I will certainly let you know. I can tell you that in volunteering, I've looked for ways in which I can make myself helpful in the community down here, Fort Myers, Sanibel. A few years ago, with the leadership of one of our congregates, I helped organize a forum on Sanibel in the morning--it was a forum on LGBT issues. I spoke as part of a panel. Let's see, what else?

More recently, I offered to help out with an environmental organization. You may know that down here in South Florida, we have a lot of water issues, whether it's the Everglades, whether it's blue-green algae, cyanobacteria, red tide off the coast of Western Florida, and there was one organization that I offered to help with. They asked me to help them with the revision of their bylaws. So, I did a little bit of work in the last few weeks going over that with them. They're concerned with water issues in the Caloosahatchee River, which is a major river down here in Southwest Florida because it does have, from time to time, some harmful algae blooms, which are caused by all kinds of things, fertilizer runoff, problems with agricultural interests, putting fertilizers into the water system as well as residential septic systems. It's a very big problem down here in Florida that the state is just starting to address. We'll see where that goes.

The other thing I thought of volunteering with is an organization that provides, to the child welfare system here in Florida, people to act as representatives of children's rights, children's interests in child removal cases, and seeing them in foster homes, or if they're with a responsible relative, learning about what their needs are and being able to assist in representing them if needed to the court in court reviews. I'm not sure that I'm going to get more involved with that. I went for an info session yesterday by Zoom, and there's an application process and a training process. It's been over thirty years since I did related work along those lines, but it was something that I thought I might be able to be helpful in and be able to draw on some experience that I had. We'll see. In the meantime, my wife and I spend most of our time here in our condo, staying safe and well. We bicycle fairly often and every so often kayak. We're right near the Gulf of Mexico. We mainly stay safe and healthy and hope this pandemic will pass over and we can get out and do more of the kinds of things that we like to do. We hope to have our vaccines as they become available. Same to you up there.

SI: You mentioned your son. Did you have any other children?

BF: No, just one, whom we're very proud of him.

SI: I think I have asked all the questions I have. It is interesting these continuing threads throughout your life in terms of community and giving back. Looking back, what do you think was the most important thing you got out of your time at Rutgers, whether that is undergrad or law school or both?

BF: I think it was the climate (I'm not referring to climate change. It was not an issue then), the atmosphere that went on because, as we've gone over, it had a major impact on my outlook on the world. Those were my formative years. I look back quite fondly on those years. If I had gone to another school, would it have been the same? I don't know, maybe, because those were the times, and the schools that I was interested in--certainly Syracuse, certainly the University of Pittsburgh--probably had similar things going on. Would I have met the same kind of people? Maybe. But one never knows. You don't get a redo. I certainly would say that those were the years that had a major impact on my life. So, good for Rutgers to hear, I guess, that Rutgers had a major impact on at least one student, and I'm sure many others.

SI: Yes, that is good. Is there anything else you would like to add to the record?

BF: You just asked about my son, and he also is very interested in social issues. I like to think he got it from his parents. He works on food-related issues at a non-profit in Ann Arbor. His partner is a PhD candidate at UM [University of Michigan], which is why they're there, but my son is not involved with the University of Michigan at all. Hopefully, our son-in-law will get his PhD in another year, and who knows. We'll see what happens with their lives, but we're very proud of both of them. We'd like to think that we influenced our son, and our son-in-law's parents are also wonderful, tolerant, open-minded people and they certainly influenced their son. They'll both do good things in the future.

SI: Very good. Thank you very much for all your time over the two sessions. It has been really interesting to learn about your life. Again, if you want to add anything to the transcript later, you can, or if you think of things that you want to do another short follow up, we can do that. Thank you again. It was really very interesting. I will turn off the recording for now.

BF: Okay.

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

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