RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH MICHAEL GREENBERG

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins the second oral history interview with Professor Michael Greenberg, on May 19, 2021, with Shaun Illingworth. Thank you very much, Dr. Greenberg, for coming back. Last time, we talked about how you were hired at Livingston College in 1971. I was wondering if you could start this session by talking about what was the status of what you found here when you came to campus, starting with your department, and then we will move on to your observations of the colleges as a whole.

Michael Greenberg: Sure. I think my first reactions were to the physical environment. I had been at Columbia. We had moved my last year at Columbia into a brand-new building that had a serious indoor air pollution problem, but it had beautiful furniture. The dean would not turn the air filters on, as I had suggested to him, and so some people with breathing problems developed and they finally had to fix it. I came here to Livingston, and our campus at that time was not very well developed. They were just constructing some of it. Our first offices were in the commander's office. The colonel who ran the base, we occupied his building, and the building is still there. I shared the front office that looked out, and I could see what was going on in constructing the campus. The colonel's office needed a little work. I would sometimes get in, in the morning, and I'd hear things behind me. There were mice running around in the old building. So, it left a little bit to be desired, but personal wise, personality wise, people wise, it was a huge improvement because I moved to a place where people really were interested in the things that I was interested in.

It took a while, a year, year and a half, before we moved to the new Livingston headquarters [Tillett Hall], which themselves were, at that time, not the most, I'll call them, beautiful. My office was pure cinderblocks, painted cinderblocks. Some of us used to kid to each other, "Which cell block are you in?" They were all painted the same color. I'd call it off white. Finally, I kind of led a little bit of a debate in which we said, "Listen, we don't all want to have the same color offices." They didn't want to paint. I actually brought bright yellow paint and painted my office, and other people brought green. Then, finally, the university said, "Oh, we'll paint it for you." So, they came in and painted everyone's office. Again, it wasn't about the rooms and the air conditioning; it was really about who your colleagues were. We caught up. We caught up after a while.

SI: When you came to Livingston, what classes were you teaching initially?

MG: Actually, I needed to teach a course in urban planning and economics, which is still taught. It's changed a lot, but it was a very large class. The person who was teaching it at the time had left and had never returned. I took on that class, and that was consistent with my interest in location theory and citing and land use-related issues. I had a pretty big class. I think it was over a hundred students, but I kind of enjoyed that. Then, I got to do some of my specialty-interest teaching. I taught some statistics but the more advanced statistics, which I still do. I taught an intro, I'll call it, undergraduate environmental health and planning course.

SI: How would you characterize the student body you were dealing with, and what was the relationship like then between professor and student? I have been led to believe, through some of these interviews, that it was a bit closer back in the early 1970s than today.

MG: Well, Livingston, I think we were pretty friendly with the students, but you're responsible for working with them, for teaching them. I was, for example, not thrilled with Livingston's grading system, which was pass/fail and honors. It didn't motivate people to work extremely hard, except those few that would get honors, and there were endless debates at the Livingston Faculty Council about that. They eventually changed it because they said that students who were applying for graduate school, the graduate schools didn't know what to do with all those passes. The students were less affluent than those at Columbia, but a lot of them were highly motivated. I mean, it was reminding me of myself and what it was like to be the first or second person in your family to even have an opportunity to go to college. I had some of my best-ever students. I still see some of them. When I became dean, I appointed several of them to the Dean's Advisory Committee. They became senior executives, vice presidents and presidents of national corporations. I'm not going to complain about our students. There were always some students who weren't mature enough to take advantage of the opportunity to go to college, but there were a lot of really good ones.

SI: I know that early on they tried to experiment with faculty living among students. Were you a part of that at all or no?

MG: No, I was not, but several of our faculty members, they lived in the dorms with the students and they managed those dorms. If you wanted to talk to someone who did that with firsthand experience, I'll give you the name of Briavel Holcomb, B-R-I-A-V-E-L H-O-L-C-O-M-B. She and her husband, Mike, lived in one of those old Livingston dorms, and they lived there for quite a while until they finally moved. They can give you a real feel for that.

SI: Let me pause for just one second.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: We are back on. What else stands out about Livingston College early on that you look back now and think it was different or experimental or tried to change the way teaching and research was done?

MG: The energy around the place was really high. They recruited some faculty members who were a little bit more aggressive than those that I met at Columbia, and there were quite a few that were interested in molding public policy. I, for example, suppose I would be among them. I wasn't just satisfied doing studies. I always wanted to take the next step and try to persuade elected officials that they needed to change policies to be more protective of people and the environment. There was a lot of energy around that at Livingston. I think they deliberately hired people with that kind of energy. I remember talking to Ernie Lynton, who was the dean at the time, who after all had helped recruit me. It was outrageous that the dean called me, just a faculty member, to help recruit me to his college. I thought, "Wow, these guys really want me to come," and we talked about the kinds of things I really wanted to do. A lot of it had to do with equity. I know that's the buzzword of the day, but a lot of it, even back then, had to do with that. So, there was a lot of energy around that at Livingston.

SI: During this period, what was the focus of your research? You talked a little bit about your research prior to coming to Rutgers, in which you were involved in water use issues.

MG: Right.

SI: What did your research focus on early on, and how did it evolve over your time in the '70s at Livingston?

MG: I got very heavily involved in nuclear power, in solid waste and hazardous waste management, and in the United States Superfund program about hazardous waste sites. I had a bunch of grants. I wrote books and articles and the like. I had more than my share of opportunities to go down to D.C. and talk to elected officials and testify and so on and so forth, and that is exactly what I always thought I wanted to do. I didn't always succeed. [laughter] I mean, I can give you examples of times where I thought I was advocating for the right thing and was partly successful. Partly successful probably is a good summary description, but I was in the middle of a lot of the issues that one heard about nationally.

SI: I know Jim Florio was very involved in that legislation when he was in Congress. Did you work with him?

MG: I love the guy, such fantastic a person. Jim Florio, for years, had an appointment in the Bloustein School. Jim Florio would, for example, come to my undergraduate class in his suit, and I'd say, "Jim, it's too much for these students. They're not used to seeing people showing up with jackets and ties." He'd say, "Mike, I always did it this way." Jim Florio would talk to the students about how the Superfund legislation got started. He really didn't give himself credit for it, but he was the one that actually wrote it. It was Jim Florio. I always thought he did, but he wouldn't say it. Frank Lautenberg, our former senator, told me that he knows Florio wrote it. Florio gave people like me an opportunity to work on projects like that. I worked for the state. I worked through the federal government.

There were just so many opportunities because our state had this issue, this legacy of industrialization, that some people thought led to it having higher cancer rates. For example, in the late '70s and early '80s, New Jersey got the label "Cancer Alley." That was because New Jersey, so said the federal government, had the highest age-adjusted cancer mortality rate, but, actually, by the time they published the Cancer Atlas of the United States, it wasn't true anymore. With the help of Florio and Tom Kean, we had incredible leadership from both sides of the aisle, and to me it didn't make any difference. Kean, Florio, McGreevey, people like that, they really cared. So, if you would go to them with an idea, they would push it along. When I went to the state and I said, "You know, this 'Cancer Alley' label is wrong. I can tell you it's wrong. I'm almost a hundred percent certain it's wrong," they pushed on the National Cancer Institute, which provided me all the raw data, all the cancer death data, and the state provided me with some grant money. I was able to demonstrate that, in fact, by the time I did my study, which was the late '70s-early '80s, New Jersey's cancer mortality rate looked like most other states. New Jersey's rate had leveled off, and the rest of the country's was going up. So, I wrote this book called *Urbanization and Cancer Mortality* [in 1983], which was what it was about. I mean, if I had stayed in New York City, I'm not sure I would've gotten that opportunity.

It was an amazing thing to call someone like Florio. When he was governor, you go through their staff, but there were people sitting there in their offices who were alive and they would hear you. Then, if they thought you were right, they'd put you through. That's an incredible advantage that I had. I was in the right place at the right time and a fairly skeptical person when I saw this "Cancer Alley" label and thought it was wrong. It was an exciting place to work.

We have this system now of where if you want to find out what kind of hazardous waste facilities, what kind of landfills, all sorts of potentially dangerous facilities might be in your neighborhood, it's available on a system called EJSCREEN [Environmental Justice Screening and Mapping Tool]. We actually developed a prototype for that in New Jersey, and then when my former intern, my buddy Tom Burke, who is now a professor at Johns Hopkins University--by the way from Bayonne--Tom Burke became head of the Office of Research and Development of the EPA. They developed this system called EJSCREEN. You look at a lot of what happened in the United States in environmental protection, and you look at where these people came from. You see Tom Burke. You see Bernie Goldstein. You see Dick Jackson. They may not be now in New Jersey, none of those three guys are, but they all have New Jersey roots and they gave a darn about people and about this state. They were just great. I'm very fortunate to meet them and they're my friends and I still work with them on things. So, there's a lot of New Jersey in a lot of the progressive environmental work that's been done in the United States over the last fifty-plus years.

SI: I got a chance to look through some of the yearbooks from Livingston early on. It looked like your department was one of the bigger departments. Do you feel like your department was supported properly, both from the dean's office and the central administration?

MG: Livingston's focus was on cutting down on disparities by race, ethnicity and income. By definition, in New Jersey, that means Newark, Paterson, Passaic, Trenton--I must have missed one place there someplace. It meant an urban focus. This may not be fair to say, but we maybe were the focus of Livingston College and the dean, Ernie Lynton, and the people that were running our departments went out of their way to emphasize that. For me, a guy from New York City, it was perfect. We were very strong. As of last year, our Urban Planning Department, which is the oldest segment of what was Livingston College's Department of Planning, was rated number two in the country. MIT is rated higher. If we had MIT's money, we'd put them in the dust. They have so much money, it's just ridiculous. [laughter] That's for another time. They raid our faculty.

Urban was the focus, and so we hired a lot of people that were very smart and focused on urban. You'd have all these conversations between people like me and people like Susan Fainstein and George Sternlieb and Jim Hughes. There was just a huge number of very, very smart people, and that's what these ratings are based on, how many publications you have, grants you have, your standing in the field. So, I wasn't surprised. I could see the people that were there when I got there, and these were really smart people. When I was dean and when I was associate dean before that, we did our best to continue to hire very smart people with the same focus.

SI: Just for the record, when did you become the dean? Was that while you were still at Livingston or when you were at the Bloustein School?

MG: At Bloustein, yes.

SI: Okay.

MG: Jim Hughes was dean for years and years and years. At some point, Jim needed some help, and so he asked if I would be associate dean of the faculty. So, I took that position in 2000. Then, when Jim stepped down, I became dean for eighteen months, not my favorite-ever job, but what the heck. The school needed me to do it for a while. In order to be dean, I had to give up some grants that I had been working on. I always had pretty strong grant funding and that was always my focus as well as teaching, but I did it for a while. [Editor's Note: James Hughes served as the Dean of the Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy at Rutgers from 1995 to 2017. Dr. Greenberg served as Interim Dean in 2017-2018.]

SI: How did the graduate program evolve? Was there much of a graduate program early on at Livingston, or did that come later?

MG: Ernie Lynton told me that he wanted us to build a big and strong graduate program. From the day I showed up, and even before I showed up, they spent a lot of time building up urban planning and, at one point, I think maybe it's still true, we had the [largest] number of urban planning master's students in the United States. That might still be the case. I'm not positive. Then, we built up a Ph.D. program, and I remember being told that we graduated about ten percent of the faculty members who became professors in urban planning and related departments in the United States. We've had some complete powerhouse students. They come to places where the faculty are very strong. Yes, it was deliberate.

We built up an undergraduate program called Community Development, and from this undergraduate community development program, we gave birth to what we call a community health undergraduate major, which eventually morphed into an undergraduate public health major, which we still have. It was our former dean, George Carey, who came to me one day, the same George Carey who I mentioned last time, he said to me, "How come we don't have an undergraduate community health major?" I said, "Well, George, I don't know." He said, "Well, good, now you can go start one." So, I started to start one, and he started hiring people and we hired a couple people to start it. Now, we have this very large undergraduate public health program. Then, we were able to help UMDNJ Robert Wood Johnson Medical School start what became the New Jersey graduate program in public health. It was the first two university graduate program in public health in the United States. We were the first.

It worked beautifully until UMDNJ decided to create a School of Public Health, and it's not until recently that they became part of Rutgers. They used to be part of a separate university. Bernie Goldstein was the first head of the New Jersey graduate program in public health and I was the co-head of it. When he went on sabbatical, it was weird, I actually ran that program for, I don't know, a year and a half, and I was reporting to a dean who wasn't even in my university. I was reporting to the UMDNJ dean. So, things were a little flexible back then. That was fun. I mean,

we got an opportunity to do stuff that was really important to people like me and Bernie. A lot of the people that I've mentioned, who I've worked with over the years, come from that background.

SI: Early on, were you involved in any student movements as an advisor? Were you involved during the Vietnam War or other various social and cultural events happening?

MG: Well, at Columbia, like I told you last time, I was right in the middle of it. When I came over to Livingston, I tried even harder to get people to think and talk and not destroy. I remember once when George Carey was dean for a year, they occupied the dorms and they occupied the dean's offices. George was from New York City, and I was from New York City. We weren't going to get real shook up, and when there was an effort to bring the police in, we resisted it. Livingston had police that were very sympathetic to the students. I don't know what it is like now, but Livingston had very sensitive police force. They were friendly. I don't know, the students might not say that, but I thought that they went out of their way not to be confrontational with students. Yes, I was involved in a way in which I was trying to get people to just say what you want to say, talk what you want to talk, but don't destroy things, don't be too aggressive. It's going to backfire. You're going to get arrested, put in jail. I had seen it at Columbia, as I described to you last time. It was just terrible.

SI: It sounds like you had a lot of respect for the first dean Ernie Lynton. How did you get along with some of his successors?

MG: Ernie was the dean when I got there. The chair of biology became the dean, Bob Jenkins. Bob Jenkins was the dean. He was another really friendly person. It was a mutual feeling. Jenkins knew who I was; I knew who he was. We served on committees together. I got along with him really well. I remember when the new dining rooms opened up at Livingston, Jenkins invited me and a bunch of the other old timers like myself to the opening. We were, I think, the first group that used that dining room, and we were laughing about how that compared to the little cafeteria we had had previously at Livingston, which was not as good looking as my high school cafeteria. [laughter] Jenkins was another really good person. I liked him a lot.

SI: When we come up to the early 1980s, that was when they start discussing the unification of the faculty and merging and changing the status of the colleges. Where were you when that initially started, in terms of what you were supporting or pushing for or hoping would happen? Also, how did the idea for the Bloustein School come about?

MG: The merger didn't really mean much to the Bloustein School because we didn't have parallel programs and departments on all these different campuses. I can only speak for myself. I was very much in favor of the merger, and some people at Livingston were pretty angry at me for taking that position. At the end of it, I'm an academic, and I bought Ed Bloustein's view that without these mergers, without having a big strong English Department, a big strong Sociology Department, we were never going to rise in the ranks, the national ranks. In our own school, we had a separate communications group. They were part of our department. They were part of what became the Bloustein School. I noticed that you interviewed Jerry Aumente. Jerry was part of our school, of our department, but when Jerry needed to move into the School of

Communications, I've got to tell you I wasn't thrilled about it, but I understood why they wanted to do that because you can't have so many departments because people from the outside are going to say, "What kind of place is this? You have all these tiny little departments at such a big state university." In the end, I bit my lip and actually was in favor of the unifications. [Editor's Note: In 1981, the faculties of the undergraduate colleges at Rutgers-New Brunswick were merged to form the Faculty of Arts and Sciences. This eliminated separate departments in the same academic subject at each of the undergraduate colleges, Livingston College, Rutgers College, Douglass College, Cook College and University College. In 2007, the undergraduate college were consolidated into the School of Arts and Sciences and School of Environmental and Biological Sciences.]

SI: What became the Bloustein School, did that get started before the unification, or was it as a result of all these changes?

MG: I think I'm going to have to be a little careful about what I say here. What became the Bloustein School kind of was a residual leftover. After they did all the reunifications, there were a couple of departments that didn't seem to fit, and so they mushed them all into one thing, I think we were called the School of Professional Studies. They put together an overall dean who was mostly a businessperson, and I didn't get along with him. He was very much interested in taking any free positions that came up because, back then, it wasn't money that hired people. It was lines. You had these things called states lines. If a state line became available in our school, he would try to take it away.

I'll just give you one example. We were trying to build up our undergraduate public health program, and we needed desperately to hire an epidemiologist. This dean decided that he was going to take that line away and give it to the business school, and I was very angry. I confronted him, and the provost, Ken Wheeler, agreed with me. So, we kept that position, and we hired a guy who turned out to be a great epidemiologist. He moved to the University of San Francisco. We hired Ron Stall. We hired, later, other people. Being the residual school was not wonderful for us. We were targeted. I may seem very quiet, but, back then, I could be kind of feisty and I wasn't going to let anybody just come in arbitrarily and take a position away from us. So, I fought, and in that case, I won.

The Bloustein School finally came about because there were other segments of people who didn't necessarily fit into arts and sciences because most of these were arts and sciences people that didn't fit. So, there were a group of people in political science, for example, Cliff Zukin, Carl Van Horn, who were very much applied people and really, really well-known people. They moved them over to the Bloustein School, and that's where our public policy program came from. The public health program came from our tiny little undergraduate community health program, which, in my utter lack of sense, I once said at maximum we would have fifty students and quickly it multiplied into hundreds. We just built up that, and eventually we started having enough people to be more than just planning and policy. When Ed Bloustein died, he got along so well with people--he got along really well with me and with George Carey and a bunch of the other people--they created the Bloustein School in his honor and that was wonderful.

SI: In general, what did you think of Bloustein and his administration?

MG: Well, I liked him a lot. He came from a small college. He was just such a straight-forward, direct person. I probably spoke to him multiple times a year. He was just so friendly. He and I, we shared the agenda of dealing with inequity. You probably know he was arrested for protesting apartheid. For people like me, that was fantastic, that he had the guts to do that. He did. He kind of lived that life. He was accessible, cared about people, he took things very seriously, and he made some good hires. Hiring Alec Pond made a huge difference. Pond was another incredibly intelligent person who made a big difference in pushing the university into higher levels of academic achievement. I went to Ed Bloustein's funeral. I was thrilled that the school was named after him. There's a case where the name of the school is based on the person, not on the money that the person may bring to the school for the naming.

SI: Can you tell me a little bit about how your involvement in issues surrounding nuclear and other forms of pollution evolved over this period? You started with how you got involved in things like the Superfund legislation, but how did that grow over your time at the Bloustein School?

MG: Yes, sure, I can tell you about that. The late '60s was the period when the United States was really wanting to develop nuclear energy. Eisenhower's speech, which I think I mentioned to you last time, I heard, but reality was a little bit different from what he proposed and I think he honestly meant it. So, I first got heavily involved when Public Service Electric & Gas decided to build a nuclear powerplant in the Delaware River four-and-a-half miles from Trenton and about ten miles away from Philadelphia as part of a larger plan to build more than a dozen nuclear power plants in the Delaware River. To make a long story short, Public Service Electric & Gas needed to prepare an environmental impact statement, and the environmental impact statement required them to estimate population at risk near this nuclear power plant.

I was called to work on this by them. I, in turn, hired my good friend Don Krueckeberg, now deceased, and Don and I took the lead working on the Newbold Island Nuclear Powerplant. To make a long story short, it was a really bad location. [laughter] Boy was it a bad location. When we had to testify before the Nuclear Regulatory Commission, I had to testify that, in fact, I didn't think that there was much of a chance of evacuating people if there was an event. That did not make the people from PSE&G thrilled with me. I remember telling my wife, "I hope they don't turn off our electricity," but it was the truth. I mean, it was just not going to work. Not only did they turn down the plant, but then Don and I were hired by the Nuclear Regulatory Commission to redevelop their land use and population-related regulations. For example, they took the work that we did, and they said, "Well, if you're going to apply for a nuclear plant location, the cumulative density after fifty miles can't be any higher than this, this and this" and they would give numbers taken from our work. We continued being interested in it over the years and, once in a while, have done something for the Nuclear Regulatory Commission. They actually hired one of our graduate students who ran the siting group within the Nuclear Regulatory Commission when new nuclear plants were being built.

Fast forward some years later and the Department of Energy is clearly building up an enormously expensive legacy of nuclear weapons sites. We at Rutgers formed a competitive group with our colleagues at the University of Washington, Seattle. That was how it started. We

bid on an open competition to be, let's call it, the academic science research group for the Environmental Management Group within the Department of Energy, the EM Group. We won that, and it's still going on. I had a meeting earlier today talking to them about the latest things. I think, I'm not positive, that someone in the provost's office told me it's the longest grant in the history of Rutgers. We had this money first starting in 1995, and we're still getting it. The project has changed. I started working on environmental management issues related to nuclear weapon sites, and now it's expanded a little bit. So, I had an opportunity to work on plutonium disposition for, we'll call it, the bomb people in the Department of Energy. It's just been very interesting work. I know a fair amount about risk analysis. I was editor-in-chief of the journal for a long time. I've enjoyed working on risk assessments and risk management studies related to nuclear waste and nuclear energy, which are actually related.

SI: I wanted to get a picture of how that involvement has grown over time. How have you seen your department at the Bloustein School grow over time? What do you think of the direction it has grown in?

MG: The Bloustein School has been run historically by people that were willing to take chances and were bold enough to move into areas that other programs wouldn't. That's the simplest way of putting it. We started out in urban planning. We incorporated a policy element; that worked just fine. When the opportunity to put in public health started, we jumped on that. Now, we've jumped on health administration. The program has just evolved because the school deans essentially have taken the position that if we can somehow relate a subject back to the core issues of equity, urban, then we'll pull in people who can do that and all of these areas do. It hasn't always been smooth because sometimes when you bring in people in an area that historically was not represented, the people there think, "I don't want these people in my department." But over the years people have figured out the relationships between all of these different programs, and, of course, the students are way ahead of the faculty. The students figure it out immediately. I once was lecturing in another part of the country. I said, "Listen, where I live, the people don't want to have to walk in the street trying to figure out about health problems. They don't care about whether a school of public health or epidemiology is in one department and health administration is another and urban planning is another. They just want it to work for them. They want it to be seamless." So, you could look at the Bloustein School as an opportunity to make some of these necessary services provided to communities and to people as seamless as possible, rather than putting them in stovepipes, which is the normal model at the university scale. I've been a big advocate for this seamlessness and getting people to work together.

SI: Do you think that was easier under the structure of the Bloustein School, or was it just the same when you were in the department at Livingston?

MG: The idea originally was born in Livingston. At Livingston, we did a lot of things that others wouldn't have done, and it just carried on over to here. It was the people that ran the school and the department chairs who understood the need for it, and when we would have external reviews, the external reviewers would even push us further to go in these directions. They kind of got the fact that all of these things should be seamless in the minds of people.

SI: Where was the school physically originally? Now, you are in the building in the center of New Brunswick, but where was it originally?

MG: Oh, the core group was first in the colonel's headquarters, and then it migrated about three blocks over to Tillett Hall at Livingston College. One of the problems that we had was that once we started having the possibility of bringing in people from political science and adding people from health, we had people all over the place. It just didn't work for the school. So, that was part of the argument that was used to get funds for the building that we're in now, which of course we've outgrown, but so be it.

SI: Was that done in concert with the New Brunswick Redevelopment Plan?

MG: It was a piece of it.

SI: Did you work at all with that part of it?

MG: I had something to do with it, but I wasn't the main force. A key piece is that a lot of the people that were involved in rebirthing New Brunswick were graduates of our school. That didn't hurt. Jim Florio was there. We had a lot of allies who wanted this to happen.

SI: Before you became the associate dean in the early 2000s, had you been involved in administration before?

MG: Only at research centers. I ran a bunch of different federally funded research centers and that was really what I wanted to do, but Jim Hughes, my friend, he asked me. He said, "I think we need somebody to do this. You're the best one." So, I said, "Okay, I'll do it." It just lasted for a lot longer than I thought it would. [Editor's Note: Dr. Greenberg served as Associate Dean of the Bloustein School from 2000 to 2017.]

SI: When you were the associate dean, what was the scope of your responsibilities?

MG: Well, Jim and I kind of worked that out as it developed. It started out as being everything, everything except that he then hired Thea [Berkhout], who I think you've interviewed. Jim made a great move hiring Thea. Thea's wonderful. I was sort of responsible for all the academic things. That was too much because I had all these grants, and Jim obviously didn't want me to lose those grants. So, I went to Jim, I said, "We have to hire someone to do this," and we started hiring more associate deans. Even when I was dean dean, I had to appoint Clint Andrews, who was Associate Dean of the Faculty, as Associate Dean of Research because the chancellor had decided that we should've had associate deans of research at all the schools. So, I appointed Clint. So, there's more associate deans, but we worked it for years.

My main focus was recruiting really good people and getting them tenured. I think it's fair to say we were successful at that. We were less successful at retaining all those people because they were doing so well. Everybody was trying to pick them off. One of my bitterest recollections was, at one point, out of thirteen assistant professors, we hired twelve women, not because they were women but because they were really talented people, and we eventually lost six of them to

other universities. We just couldn't compete with MIT and Cornell. They were all Ivy League schools. They all had big pockets, and we didn't. But we kept a bunch of them. We didn't lose them all.

SI: Over the years, I know Rutgers as a whole has tried to push to include more people of color, women, different folks who have been traditionally marginalized in academia on the faculty and in other areas. How do you think that unfolded at the Bloustein School?

MG: I know at Livingston College, that was an extremely high priority, and we were successful. But, unfortunately, a lot of the people who were hired who were minority faculty did not receive tenure because they didn't publish a lot, and the university was struggling over whether that was really important or not important. So, we lost a lot of those people. The Bloustein School has tried very hard and has been less successful than I would have wanted it to have been at hiring minority faculty members. It's not an excuse. It's just the reality. We're up against fearsome competition, especially in this part of the country, and as I've pointed out, we've lost our share. We've had some successes and some failures. We've gotten really good people but hanging on to them has been more difficult.

SI: Do you mind if we take a quick break again?

MG: No, go right ahead.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: I was wondering if you can tell me a little bit about any outside of Rutgers professional activities you have been involved in. Were you involved with any professional organizations or any committees or government work?

MG: Do you have a preference of which to focus on?

SI: Let us talk us about professional organizations. We talked a little bit about government, although if you want to add more, feel free.

MG: Okay, well, why don't I start with professional organizations? I'm a multidisciplinary person, so my favorite professional organization is the Society for Risk Analysis. There's about five thousand people all over the world who divided into the stovepipes but really get along well talking to each other. I joined that. It's my favorite organization. I still go to meetings. I served on the council for a while. I did not want to run for president. I really just didn't want to do it.

I was the first social science editor of *Risk Analysis*, and they started getting so many papers that are social science related that eventually that's now five different editors doing different parts of it. Then, I became editor-in-chief of the journal, and I did that for quite a few years. I'm still heavily involved. I'm one of the editor-in-chief's main advisors, I'll call it, in regard to moving the journal forward. I very much have enjoyed that. I'll continue that for as long as I can.

I belong to the American Association of Geographers and went to many of their meetings for years and years and years, but they always come at a time when I'm in the middle of doing something else. Maybe I'll start going again after I retire, but I like going to the AAG meetings. I won their award for research some years ago, which was kind of fun.

I'm a long-term member of the American Public Health Association. I was the environmental health editor from 1997 through mid-2019. It was a long time. The people I have replacing me in all of these cases are all fantastic, but it was time to get younger blood in that position.

Those are my three favorite societies that I actually do more than just read journals. I never was an officer in any of them. I just really didn't want to be. My thing is more studying and research, and so I served on journals for those reasons.

SI: For somebody not familiar with these fields, can you give me a sense of what the biggest change has been over the course of your long involvement with them?

MG: Yes. They seem to be moving toward each other in terms of their issues. The American Public Health Association is huge. There's probably twenty thousand members, maybe even more. It has a very, very highly-rated journal. It was an honor to serve for more than twenty years with that journal. But now, they've got a much bigger focus on risk analysis than they did when they started. In risk analysis, essentially you answer six questions. What potential problems can occur? What's the probability of them occurring? If they do occur, what are the consequences? Then, on the risk management side, how do you prevent the event from occurring? If it does occur, how do you make the system resilient? Then, the last piece of it, part number six of six, is how do you organize to be able to do the first five things that I talked about? Risk analysis is very much, I'll call it, a thinking modeling oriented discipline. I've seen a lot more of that in public health now. In geography, I see a lot of spatial risk analysis being done. They fit nicely together in my mind, maybe not in a lot of other people's, but in mine, they do.

For government, I have served on a bunch of state committees over the years. I was actually talking to one of my grandchildren about one of them. There's thousands and thousands of small landfills all over the place in New Jersey. So, I served on a state committee to figure out how to classify them, what to do about them and so on. Then, there were much bigger issues at the state scale that I've also been involved in, especially the one around New Jersey is cancer alley, where I was involved for many, many years. I've also done some work at local levels, where I've been asked by mayors and citizens groups to come talk about certain kinds of environmental health problems they thought they were having. In many cases, they were overreacting a little bit. So, I would come in and assess the problem and be an honest broker, tell them how serious I thought the problem was. But I suppose more than anything, my government service has been a combination of working for the Department of Energy and then working on committees of the National Academy of Sciences over the years, many really very interesting.

SI: What are some of the things you have done with the National Academy committees?

MG: The last one I did, we talked a little bit about before. It was plutonium disposition, which I talked about that, but, basically, we have a treaty with the Russians, who have backed out of it now, but to dispose of tons of mostly weapons-grade plutonium, a big issue. So, I was on the committee that looked at one particular proposal that they had. We wrote a report. The work is still ongoing. We made some recommendations that they are following; we just have to keep our eye on it. You really have to keep your eye on that material. It's very, very dangerous, and I think I've talked about it previously. It's not so much it's toxicity, but it's explosiveness as a fissionable product. It's very unstable. That was very challenging. It took me to a different place in the United States, including the walk down in the tunnel, a half mile beneath the surface, a salt tunnel, where they're taking some low-grade nuclear waste and burying it and where they would like to put this material. I've gotten to see some places that a lot of other people won't get to see. I won't say they're beautiful places, but I got to see them.

I worked on the destruction of the United States chemical weapons stockpile. I worked on that for years. I worked on a project of the slow but steady collapse of the United States infrastructure, where the government should be spending money to keep buildings and pipelines and other things functioning well and has not. I've worked on the sustainability committee and I've probably been on fifteen committees if I think about it, but I can't recall now. They're all very interesting; you meet interesting people. The problems are never simple. It's just the kind of stuff I like to work on. [laughter] It's fun.

SI: It is interesting that these issues are very much at the forefront of everyone's mind today with the plans that President Joe Biden's trying to push.

MG: Yes.

SI: What impact do you think the work that you and your colleagues have done has had on a public policy initiative like that? Is the government following what you want them to do, or is it kind of a mix?

MG: Sometimes yes and sometimes no, and I'll give you a good example of the yes, the chemical weapons. When I got involved, the Army was programmed for destroying the weapons, which was required because they had a treaty with the Russians, and also the base commanders, where the material was located, wanted the material destroyed. So, there was a lot of reason to do it, but I was not thrilled at their original plans. Three from New Jersey were on it. They called us the "New Jersey Mafia." We pushed very hard to get them to do it in a way that we thought nobody would be killed, but it cost a lot of money. Instead of it costing two billion, it's already cost over thirty billion. It's not a small amount of money, but there was only one fatality in destroying over a million rounds of chemical weapons not caused by an exposure. That was a huge success.

Others have been less successful. It's very hard to change a policy when the federal government has already pledged that it's going to do something and then through a scientific study, you find that maybe they're putting their resources not entirely in the wrong place, but they could redistribute them to better activities that would prevent problems, health-related problems, from occurring. Those are very, very difficult to change because there's an agreement, and when you

propose, as we did in one of the committees that I headed, that they change the priorities, the sites that were getting the money were very angry. I got some well-written hate mail from senior elected officials. About half of those recommendations were accepted; half were not. Then, there were some other recommendations which the elected officials just didn't want to hear.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

SI: We are back on.

MG: I had on multiple occasions suggested--actually back to the days of the Atomic Energy Commission--but to utilities that I thought that their desire to build so many nuclear power plants was not going to succeed. I was telling them things they didn't want to hear because other people were telling them that it was going to succeed. Here, in our own area, even though I worked for the utility, I had something to do with a bunch of the projects not succeeding, the one at Newbold Island I mentioned, the one that they proposed--you know they had two reactors they wanted to build in the Atlantic Ocean. I did some of the analysis on that. They kept pushing for it. I just intuitively knew it wasn't going to work, but the utility, at that time, that was the way they wanted to go, so they didn't want to hear it. I still feel like I gave the right advice, but they just didn't want to hear it. They weren't ready for the recommendation.

SI: Do you think Rutgers has been supportive of your efforts to move in these larger circles of regulation and working with the federal government and the state government?

MG: I think a lot of people at Rutgers have no idea that I do any of this kind of work, which is okay, because it's such a big place. I think our previous presidents, I knew all of them, they knew what I did. They seemed happy, I think, that I was doing it. Ed Bloustein was interested in nuclear power, [laughter] so I talked to him about it. Bob Barchi was also interested in the environmental-health work. I don't know our current president very well. I briefly spoke to him once, but I think at that level, the answer is yes. I think they've been very supportive of this kind of research. Our current chancellor, Chris Molloy, I've known him for a long time. I know he's very supportive of what I do. [Editor's Note: On July 25, 2018, Christopher Molloy became the Interim Chancellor and then served as the Chancellor, Rutgers University-New Brunswick until June 30, 2021.]

SI: When you were the dean, it was a brief period, but what were you focusing on? What were your goals for that period?

MG: Well, to find a replacement. [laughter] My focus, however, was that our school was not, in my view, getting the treatment it deserved on the basis of how many dollars it was bringing in. The system changed when we changed budgeting systems. Our school suffered some massive hits on our budget with the central administration taking a lot of money from us, and that was really distressing. I didn't take it well. I fought against it. Here's an illustration. If you have a state grant, the state didn't pay the fifty-plus percent overhead that a federal grant pays. It might pay ten percent, and sometimes it paid zero percent. Essentially, the university didn't give us any credit for the service we were providing to state agencies. I remember showing, not Chris, but the previous chancellor, Chancellor [Debasish] Dutta, that it was costing my school money to

work for the state because they were paying so little in the way of overhead. I know they've been renegotiating that, but it still puts us, social work and probably the School of Education at a big disadvantage. Ideally, we should only get federal grants because they pay this huge amount of overhead, like my Department of Energy grant pays an enormous amount of overhead, over fifty percent. That was my biggest problem, my biggest issue, and because I've been in it for so many years, I made some strong arguments. The university is still working with the budget system it now has, but I'm hoping that it becomes a little bit more flexible. When you're the dean, you're basically working on money the vast majority of time.

Another thing I did was we are real big believers in good teaching. Our school started a program called TEAM, which focused on not only student evaluations but teaching and mentoring. We put together our own program. I think it's been quite successful in that the younger faculty tend to be mentored, and even once in a while, they'll go around and site visit an old guy like me. Somebody will come and sit in my classroom, which is hilarious, and take notes if I need some assistance. I think that was very helpful. I feel very proud of that. I know Barbara Lee liked it a lot too, and now I think it's being integrated into what they did. [Editor's Note: Barbara Lee, Distinguished Professor of Human Resource Management at the Rutgers School of Management and Labor Relations (SMLR), served as the Senior Vice President of Academic Affairs from 2015 to 2020.]

I was basically trying to keep us fiscally in a solid position. I quickly put together a Dean's Advisory Committee of some of our best alumni. I briefly spoke about that. I think that was another thing that was important to do. It's really up to our current dean, Vonu, to make the long-term investments. [Editor's Note: Piyushimita (Vonu) Thakuriah has served as the Dean of the Bloustein School since 2018.]

SI: You have received a number of teaching honors over your long career. We talked about what you were teaching initially, but what have been some of your long-term classes or any classes you developed that you are particularly interested in or proud of?

MG: I can really say I never had a class I taught that I didn't like. I liked all of them, and, in every case, it was often me developing the class. So, I designed the curriculum. A couple of times, I designed it with a couple of other people. We have a course called "Intro to Planning, Policy, and Health," and I designed that with Bill Rodgers and Norm Glickman. That was a lot of fun. We had different ideas, we put it all together. The multivariate statistics class that I taught for years and now will teach in the last semester, since we lost a faculty member, will be from the perspective of somebody who was a math major and understands how these tools were actually built mathematically and I can introduce that into the class. I don't know if the students will love it, but it's a little bit like you're teaching somebody how to drive and they don't have any idea how the engine works. Well, I can teach a little bit about how the engine works, how the mathematical engine works. So, I'll put some of that in there. I'm looking forward to that.

SI: Over the course of your career here, how have you seen teaching change? What have been the major changes or challenges there?

MG: That's a good question. It's much more standardized now. If you're teaching a course that other people teach, typically you would expect everyone to work from the same curriculum, allowing people's research specialties and experiences to affect the class, but not so much that two students would be in different sections and you would think that one was on Venus and the other one was on Mars. They have to have a lot to do with each other. That's a big change.

There's a lot more, what I'll call, accountability in your syllabus. You have to put things together in the syllabus that we never even thought of putting in, things like integrity. I always talked about it, but I never put it in the syllabus. Now, I put something into the syllabus about it. Teaching objectives and goals are now part of your syllabus. In the past, you might have two or three, but now you might have a dozen and you want to try to show how it relates to the overall discipline. So, if you're teaching a class in public health, they have overall goals for the discipline, and you want to weave some of those in there. Actually, I think that's been better.

The big change has been what we've been going through, which is teaching online, which some people like. I don't. I don't think I'm particularly good at it, even though I get good ratings for it. It's unusual that I can have just one person in front of me and I actually have a sense of what you look like and you have a sense of what I look like. But when you're teaching a class with thirty students, how big are they, two-by-one or two-by-two? It's all of these little subtle things that I can't do. I'm a big believer in body language. When I'm teaching a class, I like walking around the room. I would say this about reporters who were interviewing me; I'd look at the reporter's eyes, and if they were writing down nothing or writing down everything and their face looked blank, I could tell that they weren't following what I was saying. In many ways, the same thing is true with students. You need to see them and talk to them. It's just hard to do across the screen. I'm sure everybody who's doing it knows that. That's been the biggest change. You've probably heard this from everybody.

SI: Oh, yes. That is one of the issues we want to ask people about. Are there other ways the pandemic has affected your work at Rutgers or your life in general?

MG: The pandemic, sure. I come into the office twice a week. One other faculty member is usually in here when I'm in here, but, as you know, if you come into your office, you have to have a test every week. So, I brought in my test this morning, and I've been tested every week, which is good that they're doing that. It's nice that a guy from Rutgers invented the spit test, we call it, even though, unfortunately, he passed away, a really nice guy. [Editor's Note: Andrew Brooks was the Chief Operating Officer of Rutgers University Cell and DNA Repository (RUCDR). In April 2020, Dr. Brooks' COVID-19 rapid saliva test was given emergency approval by the FDA. Since then, millions of tests have been administered. He died on January 23, 2021 of a heart attack.]

It's changed everything. This system we're now temporarily, I believe, trapped in makes us much less social animals than I believe the vast majority of us are. Now, could we have done this interview face to face? Probably in the old days, we would have. Would that have worked out better? I don't know. Maybe not because maybe you wouldn't have had the recording. I don't know. It's just not my style, which is probably what three-quarters of the faculty say. I've already volunteered to teach face to face in the fall. I've had two COVID shots. I had COVID.

I'm writing a public health book, and I'm writing a chapter focused around inequities exacerbated by COVID. The state's been very good to me. They gave me all the 2020 data, even though it's provisional. They may change it slightly, and I've been able to do a lot of calculations so that I can compare death rates and incidence rates and vaccination rates by age, race, sex. You can't compare them by income because the data aren't collected that way, but then I can do a study in which I compare Paterson, Passaic, Trenton, Newark, Atlantic City with the state as a whole and you can see the combination of income inequities and racial, ethnic inequities reflected in disparities. So, it's actually depressing to do the work. Doing these calculations is really tough. You look at how tough things have been particularly for African American residents of New Jersey and Hispanic residents of New Jersey, very, very difficult. The rates are much higher in every age group.

The question for me is--I believe the state, currently, with its current governor and the people running the state, gets it. They're going to push for vaccinations. As of May 12th, when they sent me the last data, we were ranked number seven in complete vaccinations in the country, and the other states that had the highest rates, among the top ten: Maine, Massachusetts, Vermont, Connecticut, New York, New Jersey. I may have hit them all. Then, there were a few others like New Mexico and South Dakota, but it's mostly the Northeast states that have historically had very progressive public health programs and environmental health programs. So, I'm not surprised there.

But within New Jersey, the vaccination rates are much lower in the same cities I just mentioned. So, I know that the governor is working very hard to redeploy resources to these places to increase the vaccination rates in these same cities and places. That's a major challenge. We still have huge health disparities and COVID-19 just exacerbated them enormously. Then, on top of that, you see it right in your own house; your children, if they're lucky, maybe go to a private school, or they maybe go one or two days a week to a public school. It's much tougher. The educational gap is clearly increasing as a result of this. The poverty gap has increased. When you look at the employment groups that have suffered the most, it's food, it's recreation and entertainment services. It's a place where a lot of relatively-poor minority populations are concentrated for work. Food insecurity has tremendously increased in the state. Maybe that's enough depressing stuff. I'm sure you know all this stuff, but I've actually just been measuring and writing about it. The state, of course, because it's our state, is happy to provide--well, I don't know if they're happy, but they provided me with the data.

SI: You talked about having a good working relationship with politicians like Governor Florio and Governor Kean, who are obviously from different parties. I would imagine that's a little different now, but in general do you think politicians are more or less or the same in terms of how they draw on the academic community in your field?

MG: In New Jersey, it has not changed a lot. Whichever side of the aisle, it seems to me that New Jersey, with some exceptions which I won't mention, has much more sophisticated open-minded people. To me, it's all about open-mindedness. Is an elected official willing to at least hear the evidence? Or do they just want to hear one side of the story, in which case I'm not a very good person to talk to because wherever I am, whether it's in Congress or in our own state,

whatever I find is what I say. It doesn't mean I'm right. It's just here's the best data I have, here's my weight of evidence response, and this is what I think. In New Jersey, I don't find a whole lot of difference, but nationally it's painful. It can be painful when you go and you talk to an elected official who is suffering from an extreme case of what I call groupthink. They bought into a way of viewing things, and if I say something to them or you say something to them and it's not fitting what their groupthink is, they're not going to listen. They may be polite, but then I'll look up and I'll see them playing on their cell phone. It's very frustrating for someone like me.

We wrote this piece for the *American Journal of Public Health*, myself and my buddies, about this kind of activity, where the process of science was interfered with, in which people like me and my friends, who historically had gotten grants from the EPA, served on EPA committees, weren't allowed to serve because of those very grants because they thought that you were biased. People with very little scientific experience or people who worked for companies and implicitly had a viewpoint replaced them. Now, that's going to change back. That's going to be changed back, but that was very, very difficult to deal with. I didn't take it well, and neither did a lot of people like me. You can't push back against people that don't want to engage. I could try to make a case where a person who had grants from the Energy Department, EPA, as well as corporations, might be the best person because they might be more open minded, might look more thoroughly into the study, but those avenues were hard to provide. It was very discouraging to be in the position we were in and watch our own country slip, in my opinion, from the best environmental protection programs down the ladder to the lowest ranked of the affluent countries, just painful as could be. Maybe that's enough said about that.

SI: Is there any other aspect of your career that I have not touched on that you want to talk about or anything I just missed?

MG: I'll just reiterate that I found it to be challenging and exciting. I won't say I enjoyed it all the time, but the fact that at my age I haven't retired must say something about it. I don't feel brutalized by it, and I don't feel restricted to just academics. I don't know if I told you; I'm the mentor to the Rutgers Baseball Team. My first mentoring was [when] Fred Hill was the coach, and now the new coach is Steve Owens. I finally went to a game last weekend, even though they lost. They lost to Indiana, which is the best team. The team won about half of its games, but they're very competitive every game. It's a lot of fun for me as an ex-baseball player to go see the players play. I like that. I like being able to go to see the games played, because with all due respect to Major League Baseball, I think the college games are a lot more interesting in that there's a lot more action. The guys are not out there trying to hit a home run on every pitch. They still strike out a lot, more than I did in my era, but there's a lot more what I consider to be action in baseball at the college level. I sat in the stands when I went to the game. I went up and sat with the people from Indiana, who knew nothing about New Jersey, they said, "This is supposed to be such an urban state." I tried to explain to them that, in fact, they were sitting in this suburban spot. You know that part out at Livingston College where all the ballfields are is totally surrounded by trees. I said, "You've got to cross back over the river and drive along College Avenue," and I told them where to go to see the campus. I always enjoyed doing that. In a lot of events with opponents, I sit down with the fans from the other team just to talk a little bit about Rutgers. I told them that that former dean of the policy school in Indiana was a good friend of mine, John Graham, so that was kind of fun.

SI: What does being the mentor entail? Is it a program for tutoring the players?

MG: The students have done pretty well on the baseball team. So, I don't get to see many of them. The idea is they have a regular mentor who works with them, but if they're not sure what they should do after they graduate or they're not sure what to major in, they can call me or talk to me. I talk to, I don't know, three or four a year. That was always fun. Some of the best players are pretty darn good students. A few years ago, Howie Brey, he wanted to major in history but also be able to be a coach. So, he needed some help in getting the courses because baseball played, at that time, fifty-five games a year. A lot of time, they're missing classes. So, I set it up so that he could have an advisor who would be able to help him just organize his classes. He was a terrific baseball player, one of the best pitchers ever in Rutgers history. That's the kind of stuff I could do. Sometimes, they're just confused about what does it mean to say, "I'm going to major in public health or in communications." I tried to explain what those mean. It's not a big deal. Mostly, I just go to the games when I have a chance and watch them and have fun.

SI: We started the interview series talking about your early family. Do you want to say anything about your family today? I noticed your wife worked at Rutgers in the libraries for a while.

MG: My family is very much a Rutgers family, but it's also a big family. My wife and I have been married for many, many decades, and we have four children, ten grandchildren, and the ten grandchildren range from their mid-twenties to four. It's a big spread. This last weekend, I went and saw our oldest granddaughter graduate from UMass Amherst, and it turned out, I didn't realize it, her dean is a guy I know who is just retiring. He's the dean of their policy school. I worked on hazardous waste Superfund sites with him many, many years ago. Then, a couple days later, we came back here, and my daughter graduated with a doctoral degree from the School of Social Work. My family, it's just a lot of people. It's very, very diverse in every way. It's really a fantastic family. They give me a lot of pleasure and not too many headaches. [laughter] My wife's really the one responsible for that. She's always out looking after the children and the grandchildren.

SI: Is there anything else you would like to add? Is there anything else that is important to know about you?

MG: No. You know more about me than you need to know. [laughter] I'm just one of these people basically who likes reading, likes studying, likes playing sports, especially baseball, and in the case of academics, I've spent fifty years being paid for something that I would have been happy to do probably for nothing if I'd had the money. For me, this was a super career, and I've very much enjoyed it. I'm lucky I'm still able to continue along and do some of the things I was able to do before. So, I wish everybody a career that they enjoy as much as I've enjoyed this one. I've met a lot of great people. My wife says I have a selective memory. The people I don't like, I forget about them. So, that probably helps a little bit, but there haven't been all that many of them.

SI: Thank you very much for all your time today and during our last session. We can always meet again if I have more questions or if you want to add more, but we will conclude today. You

will get the transcript a little bit down the road, and we can see if there is anything else you want to add.

MG: The transcript, after it's been edited, just gets posted and anybody can read it who wants?

SI: Yes, I will tell you more about that after I conclude. Thank you very much. I really appreciate it.

MG: Yes.

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

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 7/2/2021
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