RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GERALD POMPER

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Professor Gerald Pomper on April 13, 2016, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth and …

George Fakes: … George Fakes.

SI: Thank you very much for being here today.

Gerald Pomper: I'm glad to be here.

SI: To begin, can you tell us where and when you were born?

GP: I was born in New York in the Bronx in 1935, April 2nd.

SI: We are now being joined by Kenneth Chee. What were your parents' names?

GP: My father's name was Moe. My mother's name was Celia, Celia Cohen.

SI: Starting with your father's side of the family, do you know anything about how they came to the United States? Do you know anything about your grandparents and their families?

GP: My parents grew up in a small town in Poland. You can't even find it on a map, although I did visit it many years ago. They knew each other as kids, but they came to the United States separately. My mother came with her four siblings, my mother. My father followed later. She came right after the end of the First World War. My father came separately in about 1925-'26. My mother and her family were legal immigrants and went through Ellis Island, which we visited. My father was an illegal immigrant, and he went to Canada.

There's an amusing story about how he got into the United States, which we can go into if you want. He became, in the middle of the Second World War, there was an act of amnesty in which illegal immigrants from our allies supposedly in Poland were given amnesty, so he became a citizen after that. I had one brother, one older brother. We grew up in a small apartment in Midtown Manhattan. We lived with my mother's mother and my father of course and my brother in a one-bedroom apartment. There were a couple of childhood homes, but that's where I spent most of my childhood. I went to Stuyvesant High School, an elite high school in New York City, and went from there to Columbia, early admission at age sixteen. I went from there to Princeton, where I got my Master's degree and Ph.D.

SI: Let us go back to your parents coming from Poland. Did they ever talk about what their lives were like before they emigrated?

GP: Oh, yes. Their lives were pretty miserable. They were poor. They were tradesmen. My father's parents owned a small mill in this little town, and they had a very marginal existence. They're Jewish, so they also had political problems and persecution and discrimination. They were happy to leave. In 1991, my wife and I were traveling to Australia, where I was going to be for a sabbatical visit. We went the long way around. One of the places we stopped was Poland, visited this town, and aside from the Holocaust, I was glad they left to get out of this miserable

town, which still in 1991 did not have a central water system. It had a pump in the middle of the town square. That's where people got their water. It was a good place to leave. [laughter] My father left behind a sister and his parents. They were killed in the Holocaust. My mother's parents came, or she came with them to the United States, so they and her siblings did get out.

SI: Was your father old enough to serve in World War I?

GP: No.

SI: Was he affected by that?

GP: No. In any case, he probably wouldn't have been able to serve, being Jewish.

SI: Did they ever talk about any direct violence, like a pogrom-type situation?

GP: Not to them, but to my aunt, my mother's sister. She wasn't actually home, but they hid her in a closet from rampaging people, who probably would have raped her if they could.

SI: When your parents came to the United States, what types of jobs were they able to get?

GP: Well, my father was a grocer, and so he worked first for my wife's brother, no brother-in-law, and then he had a place of his own for a little while. Then, the Great Depression came, so he lost his job. He did various things. He literally sold apples on the street. He had an office job for a while, which he would tell the funny story of there was no business. He had a telephone on his desk, and the telephone never rang because there was no business. He had a minimal salary. I don't know what, but if it was five dollars a week, it was a lot. My brother was born in 1929, just before the depression. I was born in 1935, right in the middle of it. He needed money and he went to his boss and asked if, he knows thing's are tough, but, "Can we get a raise?" He said, "No, but I'll give you a second telephone." [laughter] He had two telephones on his desk.

He got into the United States--I'll tell that story--he immigrated to Canada to Windsor, Ontario, which is right across the river from Detroit. In those days, Detroit was a huge manufacturing city. The Canadians would come on the ferry every morning with a hat and a lunch pail and go to the auto factories. He got himself a hat and a lunch pail. He got on the ferry, and he walked off the ferry as if he was going to the auto factory. There was no immigration controls or anything like that. He got himself onto a train. I always am so impressed when I think of him, the courage and initiative of the immigrants. He didn't speak English. He didn't have money. He got to a foreign country. He didn't know anybody. He went to Canada, thought up this scheme, got into the United States, got on a train, paid for it, ended up in New York, and there, of course, he had an address of some relative and they helped each other and then he got a job.

After I was born, they were nice enough to say I brought them luck, because he got a job. He bought a delicatessen or rented it, paid a lease on a delicatessen, and then they did better. The depression lifted a bit. He owned the store with my uncle, who went away [in the] Navy [as a] sailor during the war, and my mother and father ran the store. I helped them out a little and my brother helped them out with labor. The war was over, and the store did better. They got

another store. I went off to college. They had a little leisure in their life, no big income. They paid themselves a hundred dollars a week in salary. I was lucky enough to get scholarships to college. Then, my father had a severe stroke in 1955, so he was disabled and essentially out of work. My mother worked at a retail store. Then, he died in 1963, a week before [President John F.] Kennedy was shot. My mother continued as a widow and worked, [got] Social Security, and my brother and I helped her out. She died in 1988.

SI: Had your mother worked outside the home before the delicatessen?

GP: No. Well, no, I shouldn't say that. When she first came in, she was a young girl, and she worked in some relative's dress shop, factory really, needle trades kind of thing, but briefly until she got married. My father, he was not coming to join my mother, but he got here and found out she was unmarried and they got together and got married.

SI: How well would you say they adapted to life in New York and life in America?

GP: They adapted very well. They learned the language. I think they forgot most of their Polish. [They] did reasonably well economically. They did not become rich, but they managed to send two sons to college or university. My brother became a mathematician for IBM, and I became a professor. We succeeded in terms of getting a higher education. They absolutely loved the United States and the freedom. After the war, I told you my father's family ran a mill, so they wondered if they could get the property restored to them. They went through some stuff. The Polish government by then was Communist, and they weren't about to help Jews in any case, certainly not U.S. Jews. They said, "You can come here and prosecute the case or file a claim." My father said he was never going to set foot in Poland. [laughter] He was happy to have gotten out alive. My wife and I, as I said, visited in 1991 when they were both dead, but he probably would have turned over in his grave with the idea that his son went back to Poland even for a week to visit. [laughter]

SI: Did they keep any traditions from their Polish background?

GP: Their Jewish background, yes. They didn't want to know that they were Polish, but they knew they were Jewish. Yes, they were not strongly Orthodox but generally observant. They kept a kosher home, observed most of the holidays, raised their kids [with] Hebrew school, bar mitzvah. We both married Jewish women.

GF: What was it like growing up Jewish American during World War II?

GP: Well, we knew there was something particularly of Jewish import in the war, but we were already assimilated Americans. We were rooting for our guys. My uncle, my mother's brother, was in the Navy. Other people were in the armed forces in other branches. It was really no different than other American kids. I spent a lot of time collecting newspapers in apartment houses near the store for the war effort. I saved ten-cent bond stamps to buy U.S. bonds. My parents didn't have any summer vacation, because they were working in the store twenty-four/seven, not twenty-four, but eighteen/seven. [laughter] [They were] fervently patriotic,

firmly Democratic, Franklin Roosevelt was a god. They were very happy with the creation of Israel. I supported them, and I raised money for Israeli causes, too.

SI: Around that time when you were a teenager?

GP: Yes.

SI: Like with a little blue box.

GP: Exactly, yes.

SI: Can you describe the area that you grew up in in Midtown Manhattan? Was it a melting pot?

GP: Very much a melting pot in our area. It has since become totally very rich, but then it had class variation, ethnic variation. I was with a group of kids, and we used to play ball together. It was like a World War II movie, a couple of black kids, a Puerto Rican, I guess no Asians at that point, Catholics, more Catholic than anything else. Most of my close friends were Jewish but not all. Stuyvesant High School was overwhelmingly Jewish but not completely.

SI: Tell us about your earlier education, before Stuyvesant. What schools did you go to?

GP: I went to a local elementary school, which was a block and a half away. It happened to be on the site where Nathan Hale was executed, and there was a plaque on the building, an old, old building. It's since been converted to a U.N. [United Nations] International School. [Editor's Note: The British hanged Nathan Hale for spying on September 22, 1776 in New York City.]

I grew up at, my apartment was at 53rd Street and First Avenue, and that's only four or five blocks away from where the U.N. came later. When we were there, it was meatpacking places. It was condemned and given to the U.N. In terms of my friends, as I said, they were diverse but tended to, especially in adolescence, became more Jewish. It was not all happy integration. I got beaten up [along with] a couple kids by Catholic kids who wanted to punish the Jesus killer. There was some of that. I never went to a Catholic service until late adolescence. I was very suspicious about what would happen to me if I went to a Catholic church. Even religiously, I didn't eat un-kosher food until I was fourteen or fifteen, but then I became secularized and assimilated, a very typical story.

SI: Do you know if your parents ever faced any anti-Semitism in this environment?

GP: Oh, yes. A couple times, people robbed the store and beat up my father. There were surly verbal comments by people being passed in the street, "Dirty Jew." You just sort of expected it.

GF: You said your father passed away a week before John F. Kennedy was assassinated. How was that for you? I am sure that was a very scary and traumatic time.

GP: It was scary. Jews go through a ritual week of mourning. My mother was still living in the apartment that we grew up in, and by that time, I was married and living in New Jersey. It was

my first year at Rutgers. The end of the mourning period was Friday. I was driving into New York to pick up my mother, bring her out to our place to spend some time with us. As I left the Lincoln Tunnel, I had the radio on a news broadcast. I'll always remember Walter Cronkite getting on the air and interrupting the program and saying, "Shots have been fired in Dallas at the president." She lived on First Avenue, and the Lincoln Tunnel is where it is. By the time I got to First Avenue and ran up to her apartment to turn on the TV, Kennedy was dead already. She came out to our place. There were these four traumatic days of mourning and Oswald being killed. For us, on a very personal level, it was traumatic, but it was also a kind of catharsis, as my father's death was being merged with the president's death. [Editor's Note: On November 22, 1963, President John F. Kennedy was shot and killed while traveling by motorcade through Dealey Plaza in Dallas, Texas. The Warren Commission investigated the assassination and concluded that Lee Harvey Oswald acted alone when he shot the president and that Jack Ruby acted alone when he killed Oswald in police headquarters two days later.]

SI: You mentioned before that like many Jewish-American families you saw Franklin D. Roosevelt as almost like a savior figure. Beyond that, were politics discussed much in your house?

GP: Absolutely, a lot, a huge amount, especially my father. He was one hundred percent American. He would read a Yiddish paper and an English paper every day, and then he had to start reading my stuff. [laughter] He didn't do too much of that. He had an incredibly strong attachment. I've never been able to be on the far left with its criticism of the United States. I'm a liberal. I'm critical especially of Republican administrations, but this was the country that saved my parents' lives.

SI: Were they active in local politics or party politics?

GP: No, no. They were loyal voters. I got into a little bit of local politics. The interest in politics certainly came from the family background. The Democratic orientation, I've told the story of the first public opinion poll I took, I participated in. It was 1944. Roosevelt's running for his fourth term. The war is, fortunately, coming to a close. We were going out to a family event, so we piled into a taxicab. I said, "Well, I'm going to take a poll and see how the election is going to go." [laughter] I interviewed ten people, all in my family, except for the cab driver, and nine of them were voting for Roosevelt. I said, "Well, he's going to win overwhelmingly." [laughter] Later on, I learned about representative samples, [laughter] although he did, of course, win. I actually saw Roosevelt, this may have killed him, but in the 1944 campaign he came to New York and he did an open car motorcade. You wouldn't dare to do that today. It was raining cats and dogs, but people were standing outside and actually saw the president's car. It was a big thrill.

SI: When you were in your early education, what interested you the most?

GP: Well, I went to college thinking I was going to be a chemistry major. I had an inspiring chemistry teacher, and I thought I was going to go to Cornell. I was admitted there, and I won a state scholarship there. I was going to be a chemistry major, and he was a chemist from Cornell. He told me about his fraternity. At the last minute, the Ford Foundation created a program of

admission of young people, I guess it was all men, to college before they were sixteen and a half. The idea was the Korean War had started. The idea was that you get two years of college before you went off to the war. They had a universal draft then. Thinking about it later, I said, "This is a really stupid idea. You give them two years of college, and then you kill them." [laughter] I was young. I had been admitted to elementary school, taken into elementary school when I was a year prior to kindergarten age because I was in the birth trough. There were very few kids who were born in the '30s, fewer kids, so they were eager to get kids into school. I went to school early, I skipped grades, and I graduated high school at sixteen.

I applied for this Ford Foundation scholarship and won it. One of the schools was Columbia, Cornell was not one of them, and they offered me that scholarship. It's certainly a good school, and in fact until then, Columbia did not admit anyone who was younger than seventeen, so this was a change in their practice, too. So, I decided to go to Columbia. One of the requirements at Columbia, grade requirement, was that you finish your general education courses in your first two years if possible, and they made that mandatory for the winners of these scholarships, which meant I couldn't take chemistry in my sophomore year. I had to finish my courses. By that time, I was less interested in chemistry. I was getting interested in social sciences. Obviously, that reflected the political stuff at home and in the world. There was serious politics in those days, world war. Then, I became interested in political science.

SI: Entering college at sixteen, particularly a competitive place like Columbia, what was that like?

GP: It was a little scary, but any college would have been scary. I was sixteen. I lived in a protected environment. It was a wonderful environment. The teaching was terrific. The courses were small. They housed me in the dorms with other people who had won this scholarship, so we didn't have an age difference. There were no women at Columbia in those days, but there were at Barnard and other places. I had a normal adolescence, except I was young. [laughter] It was fine. It was a great experience. I loved college. I loved Columbia. My third son went there. He loved it. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1889, Barnard College is a liberal arts college for women affiliated with Columbia University.]

SI: How many of those scholarship recipients were at Columbia?

GP: Maybe twenty.

SI: There was a good little group.

GP: Well, you didn't see each other exclusively. I had my roommates, but otherwise it wasn't very much. What it proved was that sixteen year olds could go to college. Columbia dropped its requirement. The Korean War ended, so we didn't get shipped off. [laughter] We got the advantages of it, too. I'm sure I would have done all right at Cornell, too. This way, every other week, I'd go home for Friday night dinner with my folks, and that was nice. Of course, I didn't have a television in the dorm, so I couldn't watch some television. They waited to get their television set until I left the house. [laughter]

SI: Do any professors stand out in your memory from your time at Columbia?

GP: Yes, I could name many of them actually. One was a guy named Jim Shenton, who was a history professor. One of the required courses at Columbia and one of the well-known courses was called "Contemporary Civilization," which is really the history of social and political thought in the west, and he was my teacher there. The faculty was drawn from many disciplines. He was just a terrific teacher, and I later took a course in American history with him. He became a friend. He stands out.

The second year of that sequence I was taught by a philosopher named Justus Buchler, who I didn't know was a well-known philosopher, but he was a terrific teacher. I remember that. I can't remember his name, but another required sequence was in the humanities. It was a course in humanities music. There was one semester of music, one semester of art, one year of literature. The music professor just was wonderful and created a love of classical music that I still have.

My mentor in political science named David Truman, he didn't convince me but he helped me get into graduate school and choose graduate school, although he didn't give me the advice he should have. I was a pretty good student; I was Phi Beta Kappa. I applied to a number of schools, and in those days they had a common notification date. My roommates, who were different people by now, opened the mailbox and brought me all the admission letters, six admissions. One of them was Princeton. One of them was Yale. Princeton offered me more money than Yale. I went to Professor Truman and said, "What should I do?" I said, "Well, Princeton's more money, and I need the money." He said, "Well, then maybe you should do that." What he should have told me, I didn't know this until later, was that Yale was in the process of becoming the center of modern political science, and the major figures in my generation of political science almost all went to Yale, got their Ph.D.s, knew each other, scratched each other's back at times. I did fine, but he should have told me, "Yale is the place for a political scientist to be. You should go there. If you have to borrow money, you'll borrow money." The tuition was, in today's terms, ridiculously cheap. [laughter] He was being permissive and nonjudgmental. In that case, he should have been judgmental.

In my own recommendations, I've sometimes told students that, "My professor made a mistake. I'm not going to make a mistake with you. You should go." I was just talking to a student. He was admitted to NYU [New York University] and [the University of] Chicago, and Chicago's not giving any money and NYU [is giving money]. [I said to him], "You should go to Chicago. If it's going to cost you money, it costs you money. You'll be much better off." I remember him. Let's see, I took another course with Shenton. I took a seminar with Truman. There are others, but those are certainly the names that leap to my mind.

SI: Are you able to say that there were factors that led you to political science, or was it just a general interest?

GP: Politics was exciting. The president of Columbia was Dwight Eisenhower. He was running for president [in 1952]. [laughter] Adlai Stevenson was the Democratic candidate. He was an inspiring figure. It certainly goes back to the family, and it goes back to the achievements of

politics. The United States did well politically. We didn't even know how well. Eisenhower was a subject of derision among my liberal friends. Later research shows he knew what he was doing. He was very clever. He accomplished things, from the interstate highway system, one of the great engineering marvels of world history if you think about it, to the acceptance of the New Deal, that got settled, to the ending of McCarthyism, we now know he was manipulating that behind the scenes, to keeping us out of the Indochina War [Vietnam War], which Lyndon Johnson didn't. That was a president we didn't like. [laughter] Then, Kennedy, of course, was exciting. The 1960 election was taking place as my wife was pregnant with our first kid. I was campaigning. I was doing it for this kid.

SI: When you were in college, did you get involved in any campaigns at that point? Did you campaign for Stevenson?

GP: I campaigned for Stevenson. I collected money. Getting to think about money today, there was an effort called Dollars for Democrats, and you went around asking people for a dollar [laughter] to support the Democratic Party. We got some. The cost of politics was much less. Television was first beginning.

GF: In your time at Columbia, was there a realization that you wanted to do political science instead of chemistry, or was it gradual?

GP: Well, it was because I couldn't do chemistry in the sophomore year, and I was doing this other stuff. I really liked it. I had chemistry in the freshman year, and because of my background and good high school, I took a six-credit course which combined basic chemistry with qualitative analysis, a Saturday course. They still had such things. Of course, it had a lab. I was talking to my lab assistant, a young woman. I said, "What do you think? I'm thinking of going into chemistry." I was a klutz. I still am. I was the type that was always breaking test tubes, and the flame test never came out right. She said, very compassionate, she said, "Well, I don't think you'd be an empirical chemist. You'd probably be a very good theoretical chemist." [laughter] I thought I was going to be an empirical chemist, doing all the Louis Pasteur stuff. [laughter] What she was kindly telling me is, "Find some other thing to do, buddy. You're not going to be a lab chemist." She was right. That helped. [Editor's Note: The French chemist Louis Pasteur invented the process of pasteurization and developed vaccines for rabies and anthrax.]

Then, I had this Professor Buchler in the second year of "Contemporary Civilization," and he was an inspiring person. I had a funny incident with him [with] politics. This was 1952-'53. He was a Democrat, and he would make this show, when he came into class, he was wearing a Stevenson button, he would make this big show of taking the button off, putting it in his pocket, to show he was nonpartisan. Then came the election, which of course was right in the beginning of November. There are banner headlines in *The New York Times*. I'm just fascinated with this election that's taking place and how does it come out. The *Times* was much bigger in those days [in] size. I'm sitting there, which I shouldn't be doing, it's only a twenty-person class, I'm reading the newspaper and spreading the newspaper, "Eisenhower Defeats Stevenson." This really pissed him off, [laughter] because it's his candidate. He gave me a "B" for the midterm or something like that. I went to see him, or maybe it was the final grade, so I went to see him. I

said, "I thought I deserved better." He said, "Well, Mr. Pomper, I don't think you always pay attention in class. Sometimes, you're reading the newspaper." [laughter] Then, he asked me a great question. He said at the end of it, he said, "But tell me, Mr. Pomper, why is this so important to you?" [laughter] I didn't have a good answer. I never questioned the grade again. Then, I had the second semester, and I paid attention. At the end of the year, each professor chose one student to go to a formal dinner with him. He picked me to go with him, so I redeemed myself.

SI: This was the McCarthy era.

GP: Yes.

SI: Do you remember this having an impact on the Columbia campus?

GP: Well, we certainly debated it a lot and not in the same way as some other schools. Rutgers, which I didn't know about, had its problems. My wife's high school teacher had been removed because of non-Communist oath kind of stuff. There were people on the Columbia faculty who had been attacked by McCarthy. It had that kind of effect. Nobody I knew ended up in jail, but certainly people we respected were affected. He wasn't at Columbia, but Oppenheimer, for example. [Editor's Note: Senator Joseph McCarthy's accusations of Communist infiltration in the U.S. government led to a nationwide witch-hunt to unearth alleged Communists, particularly in academia. J. Robert Oppenheimer, who played a key role in the Manhattan Project's development of the atomic bomb, came under scrutiny and lost his security clearance during the McCarthy era because of ties to the Communist Party earlier in his life.]

SI: Was there any activity on the far left at the time, or was that silenced by McCarthyism?

GP: Not to the far left. There were left organizations. There was ADA [Americans for Democratic Action, which] was active at that time as a deliberately non-Communist left. I was a member of that or a supporter of that. There was [an] Oxford Union debating society that I was in. There were fake political parties. I was part of the anti-Communist left there. Yes, there was activity. I don't think we felt intimidated. James Wechsler was attacked. He was the editor of the *New York Post*, which was liberal newspaper, and he'd been editor of the *Columbia Spectator*. We felt a kinship with him. [laughter] The issue was certainly around. Nobody that I can remember personally suffered, but certainly people we knew and professors [were affected].

SI: What would you do with groups like the ADA and these other parties you were involved in?

GP: You'd write letters. You'd go to campaign rallies. I certainly didn't contribute any real money. This political assembly, this Oxford Union thing, we'd have debates.

SI: Do you remember some of the topics that were debated?

GP: No, I don't think so. I think there may have been one about McCarthyism, but, no, I don't [remember]. I do have copies of the newspaper. I was managing editor of the newspaper. I have copies of many of the newspapers from the time I was there. If I ever needed to, I could

look it up in the crumbling newsprint. That was another great experience was working on the newspaper, the student newspaper. Now, it's completely independent, but it was completely [a] student-run newspaper then. The money, of course, came from the university. It was a great learning experience. There was a faculty advisor who was never around. I guess he would have been if we had any questions. There was never any interference, censorship, comment or anything. It was run like a real newspaper. There was an editorial board of seniors. There was a working editorial group of juniors who put out the newspaper every day and a group of sophomores and freshmen who wrote the stories. You started as an apprentice, and then you got bylines. Then, if you were good enough, you got to be an editor, copy editor and actually produced the newspaper every day. You took turns. You would have a day, like Wednesday was your day to put out the newspaper, literally, down to printing it. You went down to a print shop and they set the newspaper in lead type like they'd been doing for four hundred years. [laughter]

SI: Were you involved all four years?

GP: Yes. I was involved in high school, too, so it was something I wanted to do. I learned more about how to write on the newspaper than I did in the courses for sure. Then, I became managing editor my senior year. What my responsibility was was to do a critique of each day's newspaper for the people who had put it out, and I did that. That's what I do now for a living, [laughter] because I critique students' papers. You learn something, and sometimes it goes on forever.

SI: Were the articles mostly focused on campus issues?

GP: Yes, mostly. It happened to be Columbia's two hundredth birthday our senior year, and so we put out special issues on big, big topics. They had this sort of pretentious slogan of the bicentennial for "Man's Right to Knowledge and the Free Use Thereof," ending our motto with a preposition. [laughter] We had three special issues on that. This was machine-set type, a lot of work. Our final issue, one of the great experiences I had in college, the final issue was a thirty-six-page issue, and one of the other editors and I were at the print shop until six A.M., putting together this epical thing. That, I certainly have a copy of, which was great. It ran off the presses. It looked wonderful, and it had all this great intellectual content, a great satisfaction.

GF: Did you meet your wife in college?

GP: Yes, I was in college, and she was a senior in high school, Bronx High School. Yes, I met her at the sweet sixteen party of the girl I had been going out with before, yes.

Kenneth Chee: Does your wife share the same enthusiasm for the social sciences that you do?

GP: Alas, she died three years ago, a sad day, but we were married for fifty-six years. She'd already developed an interest in political science. Her field was literature and English language teaching, so she taught me a lot about literature. I taught her about political science. She collaborated on some things. She would edit. She read everything I wrote and edited it and edited a couple of my books, but she wasn't a professional political scientist fortunately.

GF: I want to mention one of your books. I saw that *Ordinary Heroes and American Democracy* was actually nominated for a Pulitzer Prize.

GP: Yes.

GF: Would you say that is your most notable work?

GP: Well, it's the one I'm fondest of. The other books are political science. Some are pretty decent, but they're much more classroom or professional books. The *Ordinary Heroes* was a very different kind of book, and so I like it best. They did nominate it for a Pulitzer Prize, but the secret is publishers nominate lots of books for the Pulitzer Prize. It doesn't cost them anything. I didn't think they did a very good publicity job or sales job. I was disappointed. A different publisher did a paperback edition. Finally, Yale University Press just gave me the rights to the book, and I got a paperback edition published. It's still the book I'm fondest of, because it's meant for a general audience.

SI: Would you say there was a certain school of thought at Columbia in political science at that time?

GP: There was a major revolution in political science in the 1950s. It was called the behavioral revolution, and it moved political science away from the study of formal institutions and legal agents, this has been going on for some time, but it moved the field toward quantitative analysis, much more statistical, purely empirical and then increasingly theoretical, closer to economics. By now, you can barely read the journals if you're not good in mathematics, I don't mean just statistics, but formal mathematical models. One of the leaders of that movement was this guy David Truman. He didn't do so much of it as inspire it and fund it and create funding mechanisms. I was seeing some of that and reflecting it. Yale, which is where he should have sent me, was a leader in this movement, whereas Princeton, I went to Princeton in 1955, by now, computers are spreading all over the universe, and Princeton still did not have a social science computer system. They used IBM cards. Do you know what an IBM cards is? [laughter] They used IBM cards for data, and that's what they taught us. I had two hours of instruction on how to use a counter-sorter machine. The training was deficient there, but it was running apace at Yale and at some other places, Berkeley and Michigan. It took time to catch up to that part it. [Editor's Note: The punched card known as an IBM card served as an early method of data storage in the mid-twentieth century.]

SI: You went to two Ivy League schools in the 1950s at a time when there was still some remnants of anti-Semitism and classism. Did you feel any of that? Do you think you ever experienced any anti-Semitism there?

GP: Not at Columbia. I went to a faculty meeting in my sophomore year as part of the newspaper coverage. It was an open meeting. They were discussing [their] admission framework, in which they would take no more than twenty-five percent from the New York metropolitan area in the interest of national representation, international representation. I knew that, but I didn't see anything nefarious in it. I went to the faculty meeting, and people there

said, "Look, the reason for this quota is to keep down the number of Jewish kids. We've got to get rid of this." [laughter] I didn't realize that was the purpose, and that was the purpose. Nicholas Murray Butler was the longtime president of Columbia before Eisenhower. He was a known anti-Semite, and he was particularly insistent on the quota. Now, other Ivy League schools did it, too. The Jewish kids came out of the tenements and were high achievers, and they were worried the way California worries about Asians today, so they put in quotas, informal, even formal apparently, as there were no anti-discrimination laws. Columbia was very strong on that because of Nicholas Murray Butler. He died in [1947]. I was at this faculty meeting when I first got the idea that, hey, there was some bias. They got rid of that. Jewish kids flooded in. Columbia's kind of funny now because a lot of the new buildings have Jewish names on them, the donors, and they're filled with Asian kids and Hispanics and blacks, the next wave of high achievers. It's a nice story.

The only time I encountered discrimination by faculty was at Princeton, where I had a year's course in political theory by a really old, old guy, a guy who came to class with lectures on paper that was crumbling in his hands and he was lecturing on Cicero [Roman philosopher] in a course on political theory. Who the hell studies Cicero? [laughter] He did. The seminar was run in the usual fashion, and every student gets a week to deal with some political theorist. He made the assignments, and I got the assignment of Marsilius of Padua. Do you know who he is? No. Neither did I. [laughter] Marsilius of Padua's an Italian, and he wrote a book denouncing the idea of papal sovereignty in favor of secular sovereignty. This is the fourteenth century and a book that Henry VIII loved, but the book is obscure as can be. He had me report on Marsilius of Padua, who had not been published. The only English translation was Henry VIII, which you could get a photostat of from Oxford. It was the only one probably in the world. I managed to do a report on it, but he gave me a "C" in the course, the equivalent of a "C." That is a time I questioned the grade, "What's wrong with my work?" He said, "Well, sometimes you're too pushy and aggressive in class." In other words, I was too Jewish. [laughter] I couldn't say, "You're stereotyping me." I said, "Well, what do you think I should do? I think I can get a better grade." He said, "Well, we'll give you a different assignment next semester. You can report on Marx." [laughter] Another Jew. He said, "Marx is too big for one person, so we'll have two people. John here will talk on Marx's life and you'll do Marx's work." [laughter] That was an even division. He did me a favor unintentionally. I read more of Marx than I know any of my colleagues had ever read, anything that was in translation, including *Capital* [*Das Kapital*], which is a boring book, and I did absolutely a great report. It was supposed to be one week, and he said, "Well, this is so much here. We'll go on another week." I came back the second week, and he said, "Well, this is such a complete report, we'll do a third week." I did three weeks on Karl Marx. I still have the notes. [laughter] He gave me an "A" in the course in the end. That was the only instance of anti-Semitism.

I wasn't conscious of being a Jew all the time. Certainly, in college and in graduate school, I had friends and dates with people of [all backgrounds]. I didn't really know any blacks well, but that was a different kind of segregation. I was really among whites. I didn't have any problem. I wasn't religious or wearing a kippah or anything like that.

SI: Were there any other student activities you were involved in besides the paper?

GP: That was the main one. I was commissioner of elections, [laughter] student elections. You know where that comes from. There's political assembly kind of thing. I tried out for the crew [team] for two days, and then I said I didn't want to spend my time in the crew practice all winter in an underground tank. It seemed very boring.

KC: Did you mention that you were in a fraternity?

GP: No, I wasn't in a fraternity.

GF: Which campus did you like the most, Columbia's campus in the city or Princeton's campus?

GP: Well, in terms of physical attraction, sure, Princeton is magnificent. At Princeton, I had a bike. For the first year and a half, I lived in the graduate college there, and you know where that is, Woodrow Wilson's memorial. That was nice biking back and forth. Then, I got married and we lived in married graduate student housing, biked there and had close friends there. Princeton's a magnificent physical place, but Columbia has a nice campus actually. It's urban, but that's part of its attraction. There were quiet spaces there. I enjoyed being married more than being unmarried. [laughter] I was unmarried at Columbia. You couldn't even have women in the dorms, so it was restrictive. [Editor's Note: Woodrow Wilson, who served as the twenty-eighth president of the United States from 1913 to 1921, graduated from Princeton University in 1879 and served as the president of Princeton from 1902 to 1910.]

GF: I am from the Princeton area. What were some restaurants or attractions?

GP: I don't remember that one. Well, by the time I was living and married at Princeton, although I had fellowships, we were living on very tight budgets. When I went to Princeton, I was a teaching assistant. I was getting sixty dollars a month. [laughter] I had to pay rent out of that. We didn't do any splendid dining out. There was a Chinese restaurant we'd go to sometimes and we could get dinner for around five bucks. We didn't have a car at first, but we didn't know how to drive. We grew up in New York City. We had to learn how to drive. Then, shortly, six months after we were married, we took a trip across the country, both novice drivers. It was a little nuts. That was magnificent. We got to see the national parks. On the way back, we had a car accident. There were no seat belts. We both had serious cuts on our face and injuries and obviously survived.

SI: Tell us about your work at Princeton. What area were you starting to focus on at this point?

GP: I was always interested in American politics and focused on that from the very beginning. Everybody had a faculty member as his advisor. Mine was a guy named [Harwood L.] Childs who had done some really interesting stuff in the 1930s on public opinion and propaganda, but this is 1955. He was a figure from the past. He knew nothing about quantitative analysis. He sent me over to see the counter-sorter; that was the quantitative training. I was looking around for a dissertation topic. Then, they hired a young guy from Hopkins, a guy named Stanley Kelley who was virtually my age and had done a prize-winning book on politics and professional public relations in political activity. That made all the difference because this was a young guy.

He also wasn't very quantitative, but he was lively, engaging, very supportive. He had a nice wife, and she was supportive. We were just married. It was just a wonderful thing that they brought this guy in. He stayed there for the rest of his career. I was his first Ph.D. He died about ten years ago. We became close friends. That was important.

Then, I got a job at City College. That didn't work out too well for obscure reasons. Then, I got the job at Rutgers, and I've been here ever since. In terms of political science, Rutgers was a very traditional department, retrograde really, small, but resistant to this behavioral revolution which had really taken over political science. They're interviewing me for a job dealing with elections and political parties, voting. The guy who had done it had just died, a guy named John George, so they had to replace him. This is on voting. They interview me, and the chairman says, "Do you believe in quantitative analysis and all these numbers in political science?" I said, "Well, it's hard to study voting unless you look at numbers." [laughter] He says, "Yes, but aside from that, do you think you need to use numbers?" [laughter] So, I heard that, that's my job, but I didn't say that. I said, "No, aside from that, I don't think we have to use numbers." They gave me the job.

I found out later I was their second choice. The first choice was a guy who became very distinguished and a close friend, too. He turned down the job because the teaching load then was four courses a semester. [laughter] When they hired me, they reduced it to three courses, but it was four courses. He, this other guy Ted Lowi, ended up at Cornell and a very distinguished, lovely guy. He said he would only take the job if it was one course a semester. Well, this is totally unheard of at Rutgers. He turned it down, and he got a job at Cornell. Then, they offered me the job at three courses. Years later, it had to be ten years or more, twenty, I was chairman of the department, and we had money, so I called Lowi up. I said, "How would you like to come here for a semester? All you'd have to do is teach one course for one semester." He said, "No, no, I'll only come if there are no courses." [laughter] The ante had gone up or down. [laughter] He came here for a lecture, but he didn't teach.

SI: Before we get more into Rutgers, can you tell us more about your dissertation work and what you focused on?

GP: One of the things that people did in those days was case studies of legislation. A guy named Stephen Bailey had sort of started this. In 1946, he wrote a book called *Congress Makes a Law*. The law was the Employment Act of 1946. A very good case study, and we said, "Hey, there's a book subject." People started publishing studies of the passage of different laws, and the joke became this book is going to be called, "Congress Makes Another Law," or, "Congress Makes a Third Law." I was sort of in that mode, and I'd been interested in labor, labor unions, probably because of my liberal bent. I thought of doing a different angle. Congress makes a lot of laws, but there are more laws that they don't make. There are a lot laws that fail to be passed, bills [that fail] to be passed, and maybe it's different when you look at the reasons why Congress doesn't make a law. I did a case study of the amendment of the Taft-Hartley Act, the labor law, which was never amended, though there were many attempts and [President Harry] Truman ran against the law in '48. That was my dissertation, Congress doesn't make a law. I didn't call it that. I learned some stuff there, and I learned some more interviewing techniques and contacts. The dissertation wasn't published as a book, but a number of chapters were published. It started

my publishing career. [Editor's Note: Congress enacted the Taft-Hartley Act, also known as the Labor Management Relations Act, in 1947 over the veto of President Harry Truman. The law restricted the power of labor unions.]

SI: At that time when you were at Rutgers looking forward to tenure, what was the standard for tenure? Was it getting a book published?

GP: No, in political science, it was a book and they said, "Or its equivalent in articles," but they never said what the equivalent was. It was pretty clear and pretty mechanical, so get a book published. I wrote a different book called *Nominating the President:* [*The Politics of Convention Choice*], which is a study of presidential nominations, and that was published by Northwestern University Press [in 1963], a respectable press. I got pretty good reviews. After two years, they promoted me to tenure, three years at City College and then two years here.

SI: You were teaching at City College, when you mentioned before, you were campaigning for John F. Kennedy and having your first child.

GP: Yes.

SI: What did you do with the Kennedy campaign?

GP: Just street campaigning.

SI: I would imagine in New York most people were positive about Kennedy.

GP: Oh, yes, yes. The Catholicism helped. I was there living in an apartment area in Queens, and it was New York. It was a combination of Catholic and Jewish. [laughter] He got a good reception. The thing was getting people to answer their doors, which they would do more readily in those days, and turnout. New York was not as sure a Democratic state then as it is now, so it was important to canvas. Then, there was a reform movement in New York at that time within the Democratic Party, and I had done of a little of that in my old neighborhood where I grew up. Then, we moved to Queens. There was a reform club there, and so I joined that. In 1961, there was a mayoral election. Robert Wagner was the mayor of New York and he was being dumped by "the bosses," so we were supporting Wagner. [Editor's Note: Dr. Pomper is referring to Robert F. Wagner, Jr.'s break from Carmine De Sapio and the Democratic Party machine of Tammany Hall in 1961.] Here's a turning point. This is a group of mostly young people, and part of the campaign to support Wagner was running candidates for City Council to strengthen the ticket and fill out a ticket. They asked me to be the candidate for City Council, "You're a political scientist, young and vigorous and good looking, young family." [laughter] It was very tempting, but I said, "I've got to work on tenure and publications, and it's money. I know campaigns cost money. I don't have any money, so I have to decline." They said, "Okay," and they ran a guy, a middle-aged lawyer, who did have money, a decent guy. Wagner won the primary. Every candidate on his ticket won, swept the city, regardless of quality, and so I would have been nominated if I were the candidate, not because of me, just because Wagner carried everybody with him and this was a relatively liberal area anyway. I would have been a City Councilman. I've told classes about the effect of money on politics is not so much at the high

level, presidential. If you're a presidential candidate of a major party, they'll be money. It's at the birth level, when you first enter politics, that the money is important, as in my example. I don't regret it, but it's certainly one of the things that changed. Then, I left New York anyways, but I might not have.

SI: You came to Rutgers in the fall of 1963.

GP: '2.

SI: 1962, okay. You mentioned that the department was more traditional. How large was the department at that time?

GP: Five maybe, six. It had just separated from history. It had been the Department of History and Political Science until 1960, I think, so it had just become a separate department. It was small. It had a guy who was chairman and longtime leader of the political science wing who did a dull history of western political thought but a required book. It had a guy who did urban government, which is the most dreadful subject in the world, and he was dull. It had a guy who knew his stuff in constitutional law, but he was very dull. [laughter] It had a guy who was retiring in state government, and he was pretty dull. I guess there's more people. The guy who hired me was a guy named Ardeth Burk, who was a friend of Henry Winkler. You must have done interviews with him.

SI: Yes.

GP: He was a Japanese government specialist, and he knew his stuff. He was a decent guy, but he would not set the world on fire. A couple of other people, and they had a couple of people on temporary appointment. What number am I up to, eight or nine or ten? They had a specialist in Southeast Asia. Who thought we needed a specialist on Southeast Asia? Vietnam had not happened yet, but then it did, and we saw why we needed a specialist on Southeast Asia. It was not a very interesting group, but a job is a job. By this time, I had two kids. There was a possibility maybe this would get better. People get older, leave. Then came the '60s. I got tenure in '64. Then came [Martin Luther] King's assassination [in 1968], urban riots. Livingston College was formed in theory, on paper, even before then. I met the guy who was going to be the dean, Ernest Lynton. I liked him very much, and he invited me to be on the planning faculty. [There were] no commitments, just the planning faculty, but he was looking toward commitments. I got into Livingston planning, and it was exciting on its own and lively people. That was a new development.

SI: You started there. Was that just the Rutgers College department?

GP: Yes. There was no single department.

SI: Right, it was not yet unified in the Faculty of Arts and Sciences.

GP: Right.

SI: Did they have the same number of people in the political science department at Douglass?

GP: No, Douglass was very small but more interesting because they hired new people. The '60s were a period of expansion, so some of the people are still around at Douglass and retiring were first hired then.

SI: Were there any female political scientists at any of those departments?

GP: Not until the late '60s. Once in a while, the Rutgers department met in somebody's home for a social thing, like two or three times, and a woman had been hired in the late '60s and she came to the thing and she was one of the last to arrive and you could see or hear the tenor of the discussion change. It got edgier and sort of cautious because there was a woman in the room. That certainly changed with Livingston. I was the first chairman at Livingston. We made more of an effort to hire women and so did everybody else. Then, the other departments started hiring women, too.

SI: Was it around 1965 that the planning started for Livingston?

GP: Yes.

SI: Livingston did not open until 1969. I know originally it was planned as an honors college. What were the initial intentions?

GP: Well, nobody knew really. The most obvious thing was simple expansion. The baby boom generation was coming to college, and people knew this for eighteen years and finally we had a plan for it at the State University [of New Jersey]. We bought or the government gave us Camp Kilmer, and there were going to be three colleges there. They had the romantic names of College A, College B and College C. What became Livingston was going to be the first, but there were going to be two others. A lot of the planning and a lot of problems were because the assumption of three colleges was never fulfilled. There was one college and the isolation of Livingston and the small size, it only had three thousand students, were problems, whereas nine thousand students there, which was the original plan, you would have had the base for a much bigger kind of thing. We've had forty years to repair that problem, and now they've built all those dorms over there and so they have a big student base. I was just there for a lecture. I couldn't believe it. I hadn't seen it since they finished those dorms there. What is this? [Qdoba] Mexican Grill and an Asian restaurant and a movie theater, this isn't the Livingston I knew. I wish we had it.

We had a very thin base. The space was there, the need for expansion was there, and then beyond that, who the hell knows what to do. We had a great provost, Richard Schlatter, and he appointed Ernest Lynton, who was one of the great intellects around here, as the dean. Ernest then went ahead and recruited a fantastic faculty and asked me to be the acting chair of political science, and it was obviously a ploy. He wanted me to come there, and eventually I said, "Yes, this is exciting." There were lines; you could hire people. There were promotions. He said, "I will guarantee your promotion to full professor" and salary increase and all that. It was sort of Spartan in some ways, not that there were great accommodations on this campus, but we were

living in barracks first, the offices. They opened Tillett Hall, which also is not a great piece of architecture, but it was better. It was exciting because you were creating a college.

What was the college's purpose? People had different ideas. I still remember when the first class enters, the first session is September 1969, the college opens. The buildings are half finished, but there's a formal ceremony. Ernest gives this talk, you should have this somewhere in your records, on what is Livingston College, and he defines four missions for the college. Do you have that?

SI: I do not, but the records of Ernest Lynton are in Special Collections and University Archives.

GP: There are four missions in different people's minds. One is it's going to be the MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology] of the social sciences, a phrase that would live in infamy. Two, it's going to deal with the diversity of New Jersey's population and give opportunity to previously discriminated populations, that is, blacks and Hispanics. Three, it's going to be a place for educational innovation. I would later say, in other words, it's going to be the place we wish we had gone to. [laughter] Four, it's going to be an urban college in the middle of Piscataway. Well, that all sounds good, except the four missions clash with each other. [laughter]

Ed Ortiz, who was in the urban studies department and became a dear friend, he said, "These people don't understand what innovative education is. Innovative education is when you can read, instead of all these fancy things." [laughter] We're trying to deal with underprepared populations. Everybody was committed to a large black and Hispanic presence [to counter] historic discrimination. We don't worry about the Asians at that point. That's very different, because these kids are underprepared, from being the MIT of the social sciences. Can you do both? Well, who knows? People just went ahead with all these, "The Livingston mission is" and then you can fill in the rest of the sentence with how you felt that day or what your particular bent was. Ed Ortiz's comment was quite right. It was possible to graduate Livingston taking only courses in Marxism, because you could create your own major. There were a number of faculty arguments over that. Marxism is a very important intellectual tradition, but it's not the only tradition that you should you about. Well, why not?

That was another wonderful thing about Livingston though. Faculty discussions were real discussions, arguments, but some really good minds and certainly a lot of fun, even when it was nasty and bitter. There were some really decisive things. It was fun to engage in that. There would be days, I stayed on the Rutgers College faculty for a while, and there would be days I would go from a Livingston faculty meeting to a Rutgers faculty meeting, and the meetings would be in two different worlds. In the Livingston faculty meeting, I would be sort of on the right wing of whatever the issue. I'd go to the Rutgers faculty meeting; I'd be far on the left. I'd use the same words. [laughter]

GF: When you were teaching at Rutgers, did you have any students that you bonded with more than other students? How was that experience for you?

GP: At Rutgers College in particular?

GF: What was it like transitioning from being a student at Princeton to being a professor at Rutgers?

GP: Well, I had the three years at City College, so I had the transition. I didn't have any problems of somebody who teaches at his alma mater and you're not sure if you're a student or a professor. I came here as a professor. I didn't have that kind of problem. I liked the students from the very beginning. It wasn't my first contact with Rutgers. My first contact was on the newspaper. Rutgers was playing Columbia football, and so we on the Columbia newspaper challenged the people on the *Rutgers Targum* to have a football game before the football game. We won. [laughter] I threw two touchdown passes to my roommate. Whenever we get together, we remember our victorious football game.

SI: During the 1960s, there was the civil rights movement and the anti-war movement. Faculty and students were very involved. How closely did you work with student groups that were against the war, or was that an interest of yours at all?

GP: Well, sure, it was an interest, and I talked to students. I wasn't a sponsor of anything, but I was on some marches. I remember the bus trip we took after Kent State. There was a large bus delegation organized here. We sent about five buses, leaving at some ungodly hour to lobby the congressmen against the war and for a resolution to cut off funding and, incidentally, [to enact] an eighteen-year-old vote. That was exciting too, people singing on the buses, "Where have all the flowers gone?" and the Big Muddy. It was good stuff that was going on. I was glad the students were involved. There was also some stupid stuff. Genovese made his famous statement. I thought that was dumb thing to say. It was even dumber a year later when he repeated it, "I welcome a Viet Cong victory." I think he regretted it later on. [Editor's Note: Rutgers hosted three teach-ins in 1965 to respond to student activism and provide open forums for debate about the Vietnam War. On April 23, 1965, at an all-night teach-in at Scott Hall, Eugene G. Genovese, an associate professor of history, stated, "… I do not fear or regret the impending Viet Cong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." Genovese's statements generated a firestorm of controversy. Rutgers President Mason Gross, with the support of the faculty, resisted pressure to dismiss Genovese and resolutely defended the principle of academic freedom. In early May 1970, students on campuses across the nation, including Rutgers, conducted a strike to protest America's invasion of Cambodia. On May 4, 1970, members of the Ohio National Guard fired upon a group of anti-Vietnam War demonstrators at Kent State University, killing four students and wounding nine.]

SI: Did you go to that teach-in?

GP: At least one teach-in I spoke at. I didn't say anything that provocative, but I was certainly anti-war.

SI: What was the relationship like between the history department and political science department, particularly since they had been recently separated?

GP: Just departments, it was just like the department of philosophy. We have colleagues there, some joint students, occasional courses, I think, got credited in either department. Richard McCormick, Sr.'s course "History of Political Parties" I think you could take that for political science as well as history credit, and Dick would recommend some of his students to me. A lot of personal relations. Dick McCormick, Sr., I was close to. We visited him in Cape Cod. I gave my kid the tiller of his boat up there when we visited once. [laughter] I certainly knew the younger one, too. I knew him as a kid, and then he got older. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Richard P. McCormick (1916-2006), RC '38, GSNB '40, enjoyed a distinguished career at Rutgers as a professor of history, university historian, dean of Rutgers College, and scholar of New Jersey history, Rutgers history and U.S. political history. Richard L. McCormick, president of Rutgers University from 2002 to 2012, began his career as a history professor at Rutgers College in 1976.]

SI: Do you remember what the reaction was on campus when Dr. King was assassinated?

GP: On campus in particular?

SI: Yes.

GP: No, not uniquely on campus. There were memorial services, but I don't remember anything [pertaining to the] campus. I remember Kent State more in a campus way. At Livingston, one of the reactions to Kent State was that the Livingston faculty declared, "We want to negotiate a truce with North Vietnam." [laughter] It was going to exempt itself from the war. Irving Horowitz and I couldn't stop laughing. Everybody was against the war, and obviously everybody was against Kent State. There were silly things to do, and there were maybe useful things to do. Declaring the end of the war with Vietnam was not a useful thing to do. [Editor's Note: Irving Louis Horowitz served as the chair of the sociology department at Livingston from 1969 to 1973.]

SI: How did you go about building the political science department at Livingston?

GP: I brought over one colleague from the Rutgers College department, Gordon Schochet, who the Rutgers College department didn't want to give tenure to and I thought it was terrible and he deserved tenure. I got Ernest to agree to accept the line. Then, it was a matter of taking advantage of opportunities. I hired a graduate student as a teaching assistant for one of our courses. He's still a friend. He told me about a guy named [Wilson] Carey McWilliams who he knew at Brooklyn College. I said, "Well, I know the name, but that's the father." He said, "Well, you ought to meet him and ask him if he's interested in a job. Have him come out and give a tour." He came out, and he was brilliant. He was interested in a job. Ernest had money, was interested, and this is a brilliant guy to do political theory and we have Gordon. He said, "Okay, here's the money." Things just developed like that. You heard names. We wanted an African specialist because of the African American population we helped to recruit, and we wanted somebody in the politics of Africa. We had an ad. We got applications from different people. One was a young woman from Northwestern, which was a center of Africa studies. We interviewed her. We didn't quite have the money for her, but Ernest said, "Well, we need a faculty resident advisor in the residential dorms. She's unmarried. Would she be willing to be

the residential advisor and for half her salary?" "Yes." "Okay, come and be our Africa specialist." That's Barbara Lewis. Meanwhile, a guy from Africa shows up [Cyril Matuso], and he applies for the job. I said, "Wouldn't it be great to have an African teach African politics, especially since she's only going to teach half time?" "Okay, and we'll split his line with Douglass." He arranges that kind of deal.

It was a time where budgetary constraints just weren't the same, and there was an expanding student population, expanding state budgets, a terrific state administration, despite Genovese and all, and Rutgers really becoming the State University finally. The income tax helps fund the state. It looks like catch-as-catch-can, but it was find me smart people. We found a lot of smart people. Ernest hires a guy named Dick Wilson as assistant dean who's a political scientist who's a China specialist. Wow, China, sure, we should have a China specialist. [laughter] We had a Chinese department for the first time at Rutgers. A Chinese department should have Chinese politics. China is the biggest country in the world, right. That's how we grew. It isn't as if there were six slots, and here are smart people. Then, Carey says, "I have a former student who's at Harvard and he's a political theorist." Do we want three political theorists in the department? Why not, if we've got the money for it? So, that's Dennis Bathory. Then, Dennis marries Barbara Lewis, but that was not planned. [laughter]

SI: That is almost unheard of today, having so much access to resources and funds.

GP: There are others. There's a black urbanologist from Princeton, a guy named (Bedi Foster?). That's terrific. That's two for one. We get a good field, and we get a black guy. Here we have a department of six or seven people, and two of them are black. Where do you find that at a major university?

SI: How soon did that change in terms of getting less access to resources?

GP: In the early '70s, yes, with the recession. By that time, I was no longer chairman. [laughter]

SI: How long were you the chairman?

GP: I was the chairman for three years. Then, I became something called the New Brunswick chair for four years, I guess.

SI: Was that the super chair?

GP: Yes, super chair without Superman powers. [laughter]

SI: There were a lot of innovative things going on at Livingston College, like the resident faculty advisor system. What kinds of things stand out that you were trying to accomplish at that point? Did many of them go by the wayside quickly, or are any of them continued up until today?

GP: I think my interest was the teaching innovation, curricular innovation, but you had to do everything at once. You literally had to do this while buildings were being constructed. What struck me at the time or later was we had a very smart faculty, people who were world experts in stuff, and we did not apply what we knew from our disciplines to the environment we were building. We had terrific psychologists, including [Lawrence] Larry Pervin and adolescent psychologists, people who knew something about adolescent psychology, and they didn't tell us [laughter] about the things we were doing wrong with adolescents. For example, the first year was six hundred freshman and about a hundred sophomores. What social structure do you develop where you don't have built-in experience informing the inexperienced people? Instead of starting from the bottom, bringing in freshman, without guidance from upperclassmen because there were no upperclassmen, we probably would have been better off if we started with a hundred seniors [laughter] and let them fill in the classes that way. We did it wrong, inverted. The psychologists didn't say anything about it. We had world-famous anthropologists, Robin Fox [and] Lionel Tiger. They know about people living together in groups, and they don't say, "This is an unformed society. This is the state of nature. You want a stable place; you need things."

One thing you need, for example, is physical activity. We have eighteen-year-olds that have got hormones racing through their bodies. We have no gym. The only physical activity is you've got outdoor basketball or go over somewhere else or sex. We don't think about the sex. Wait a minute. We're all for freedom. What are you going to do about birth control, rape, possible assault? Really, the question isn't raised. It should be. Of course, what happens?

Then, you've got kids coming from urban environments, ghetto environments, their norms and problems in chaos, and then we've got kids coming from leafy, poetic, white suburbs, who've got romantic visions of kids from urban neighborhoods when they don't really know, they don't go to school with them. These are the two dominant cultures. [laughter] Why doesn't somebody say, "Wait a minute, how are you going to accommodate this?" Of course, you're committed to the suburban kids and the urban kids. What do you do about it? Nobody thinks of the problem. The first day of school, a bunch of black kids, urban kids, decide they don't want the rooms they've been assigned to. They want to live together as urban black kids. They grab the mattresses, and they take over rooms. Nobody foresees the problem; nobody has any idea what to do about it. Of course, you can't do things like say, "You may not do that," because we're in a permissive atmosphere and everything can be done.

Barbara Lewis, who's the woman who becomes residential advisor, find out the girls do not know about birth control. I mean, they don't know. They think orange juice after intercourse will get rid of the problem. It doesn't. So, she sets up lectures on birth control, and, among other things, she gets accused of genocide. She's trying to get rid of black children. Stuff like that goes on. Gordon Schochet's the world's leading expert on the state of nature and political theory. Does he tell us we're about to enter one? No. [laughter] There are these conflicting missions.

I was interested in teaching innovation, but how do you make it work? I tried, and I think many of them did succeed. I taught a joint course on ethnic groups with a black guy, a white Protestant and another Jew, and we talked about Puerto Ricans and Italians and blacks and Jews. We had a

great time and other people did. There were some wonderful courses and some good experiences. The debate helped shape things, and the very uncertainty. This is all new. What a great opportunity. Instead of falling into a place, you come to Rutgers College, you've got a curriculum that's been there a hundred and forty years, two hundred years, and here, it's ground zero, which is terrifying but exciting at the same time. If you think there should be pass/fail in all courses, you can actually try it. It didn't work, but we tried it. [Editor's Note: Livingston's grading system originally consisted of three notations: honors, credit, no credit.]

You think there ought to be collaborative courses, everything could be tried, and new curriculum could be tried. Some of it didn't work; some did. Women's studies started at Livingston [with Dee Garrison and Phyllis Mack]. There's a lot of crap that goes on in women's studies, as there is in other departments, but it's been an important innovation in American education. Livingston pioneered that at Rutgers and in many ways is a leader nationally in that area. There was no anthropology department when Livingston was founded. There were anthropology courses in sociology. Ernest was very good at that. He found these gaps. Computer science is the most notable. Obviously, there was going to be a computer science department at Rutgers, but he pioneered it and created it and got a fantastic guy [Saul Amarel] to head it, who then hired terrific people. Anthropology, you've got Robin Fox and Lionel Tiger, world-famous kind of people. He built a terrific anthropology department. In political science, he recognized what we could do and gave us the support. He built a different kind of history department. All that was new. Eventually, there would be a computer science department. Eventually, there would be, just from the growth of Rutgers, but there wasn't one. Anthropology had existed as a discipline since, when, the end of the nineteenth century at least. Rutgers still didn't have one. Computer science had been around since, what, the 1940s, MIT. Rutgers still didn't have a computer science academic department. We didn't have a Chinese department, a [language] spoken by more people in the world than [English]. Well, I guess English is probably still spoken by [more]. How come we don't have a Chinese department at Rutgers even before the Asian students start arriving?

GF: Were there a lot of race tensions?

GP: On the student level, sure. At Livingston, it was even more, I think, because they were coming from different worlds. White kids, not all, but much more likely to come from the Summits, Short Hills kinds of places, and the kids coming from Newark, Camden, Jersey City, and they, the black kids, had views of the white kids that were not always accurate. The white kids had views of the black kids, sometimes romantic, sometimes fearful. This was the result of a segregated society, and it's segregated even when it's not segregated. The high schools were segregated even when they've got white and black kids. You take that, and you bring it up to the college level, where we're not going to restrict them and we're going to have coed dorms. I'm not against teenage sex, but it's a volatile kind of thing. Put that together with a permissive attitude. Of course, we don't want parietal rules and that's retrogressive and overly conservative. There was a guy in the computer science department who [had] a very smart idea. He said, "We should have very tough rules against sexual contact and sleeping over, and don't enforce them." [laughter] If we have tough rules that we can ignore with relative impunity, they will not then violate the more serious rules like drugs and trafficking. Teenagers need to crash through some

barrier; let's give them a barrier that is relatively harmless or controllable. It was a smart idea, but you have to think about stuff like that.

SI: What impact did drugs have on campus?

GP: They were selling on campus. Most of the selling was by nonwhite kids but not all. There was at least one guy who was abducted, in this case by blacks, for selling and shipped off, and they put him on a train or a plane to somewhere. So, there was some self-policing. This was serious stuff, drugs being used certainly and being sold, competing. There were, to some extent, racial racketeers, people using Black Nationalism, in particular. We had a dean who reputedly, I believe this, an assistant dean, who was having sex with students, black girls, and telling them it was their responsibility to the race to have more children and he would accommodate them. I can't prove that and nobody will acknowledge it, but that was the rumor. This was a guy who changed his name, after he came, to an African name, which is fine, but he made such a show of it. He taught a course on the black experience in America, a good idea having such a course, and he wouldn't let whites into the course until the dean said, "You can't do that. It's illegal." He let whites in the class and made them sit in the back of the room. [laughter] He had a record, I still have it, of the March on Washington, LP record. He said, "Do you want this? I don't want this anymore." He gave me the record. [Editor's Note: An estimated 250,000 people participated in the March on Washington for Jobs and Freedom on August 28, 1963 in support of the civil rights movement. Martin Luther King, Jr. gave the "I Have a Dream" speech, which was first spoken earlier that summer on June 28, 1963 in Detroit.]

SI: We are almost up to four o'clock. We have been going on for about two hours.

GP: I can spend another half hour if you want, or I can come back sometime.

SI: We might just have you come back.

GP: Sure.

SI: I will look over the interview. What we have gotten into so far is great. Thank you very much. I appreciate it. We will be in touch to try to schedule something in May.

GP: Sure.

SI: Thank you very much.

----------END OF INTERVEW----------

Transcribed and reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 10/18/18
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