RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOSEPH J. SENECA

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Dr. Joseph J. Seneca, in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on September 10, 2012 with Shaun Illingworth and …

Paul Clemens: … Paul Clemens.

SI: Dr. Seneca, thank you very much for coming in today.

Joseph Seneca: A pleasure to be with you.

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

JS: I was born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania on January 6th during the war in 1943.

SI: For the record, what were your parents' names?

JS: My father's name was Joseph. My mother's name was Norma.

SI: Starting with your father's side of the family, do you know anything about where the family came from, if there is any kind of immigration history there?

JS: I suspect like all American families, [laughter] most American families, yes, of course, we have an immigration history. My father was born in America. His wife, my mother, was born in America. They were both born in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, but two out of their four parents were born in Italy, in the middle of Italy. They migrated to America near the turn of the nineteenth into the twentieth century and were working-class people. My grandfather was a tailor. The other grandfather on my father's side was a stone mason, carver of stone, and he worked on many of the facades of the buildings in Philadelphia during his youth. He died as a young man. I never met him. He died in the 1930s. They were from Italy, and I am Italian-American through both sides of my family, my parents.

SI: Was your family located in the Italian section of Philadelphia or a different area?

JS: I did not grow up in Philadelphia proper. My parents moved from Philadelphia to the suburbs. Most of my father's relatives and my mother's relatives remained in Philadelphia, and they certainly grew up in the Italian section of South Philadelphia. My father was one of eight. My mother was one of eight. These were very large families. There are innumerable cousins, many of them still living in Philadelphia, or in the Philadelphia area. Again, they were working class. Both of them worked with their hands, my father's father and my mother's father, and they were skilled craftspeople.

My father was the first in his family to go to college, and he was the only college graduate. He went to a business school, Benjamin Franklin University, in Washington, D.C. during the 1930s with a degree in accounting and then worked with the Internal Revenue Service all his career as a professional in Philadelphia.

SI: Did your father, since this was the time of World War II, did he serve in World War II?

JS: No, he was born in 1914 and was not drafted at the start of the war and served in the federal government as an employee, first, with the Interstate Commerce Commission and then with the Internal Revenue Service. I believe he had some exempt status through that service.

SI: Did your mother ever work outside of the home?

JS: She did not. I think she had several jobs when they were first married and lived in Washington, but not professionally as a full-time career person, though she worked in the home.

SI: Did your parents ever tell you any stories about how the war impacted them and what that period was like for them?

JS: Sure, my father remembers it vividly. He has a great deal of written correspondence that I have reviewed from when he worked in Washington. He used to take the train back and forth to Philadelphia, from the Philadelphia station to Union Station. I remember he used to sign his correspondence, "Onto victory," or some words to that effect. It was a very vivid period in their lives, obviously. They talked about what it meant for work, my father coming out of the depression as a young man, what it meant to be able to go to work and how it affected all his family in terms of being able to work as part of the war effort. His two brothers served in the service, both United States Army, one in a support role in the European Campaign and the other, I think, only remained in the United States. Yes, I remember they used to speak about conditions in Philadelphia during the war and were very much American in the sense of being involved in the country.

My father [was] a life-long Democrat, identifying deeply and strongly with Franklin Delano Roosevelt and all that he did during the New Deal years, when my father was just starting out in his career and how important that was supporting lower and middle-income families and all of the initiatives of the New Deal. So, yes, it was very vivid in their lives, that whole period, the Great Depression and the war years.

SI: Were your parents active in politics at any level?

JS: No, no, they were just good citizens. They voted in every election. My father was deeply cognizant of political events and following the national news and participated as a citizen.

SI: Your earliest memories would be of living in the suburbs, not in Philadelphia.

JS: I was three or four when I moved. I have vague memories of living there. I certainly have lots of memories of going back and visiting family weekly for the whole time as a young boy and into my high school years. My parents would return to see their family for Sunday dinners and Sunday gatherings. These were, as I said, big, big families, and they would all gather at the grandparents' house. Those were noisy and large and rollicking events very much in the city in row homes in South Philadelphia, very convivial and very neighborly with lots of comings and goings, very Italian.

SI: In which suburb did you grow up?

JS: I grew up in a western suburb of Philadelphia, right outside the city limits, in Upper Darby. It's a large municipality. I went to public high school there, grade school. I was able to walk to grade school and walk to the high school. It was a big, big high school, very large graduating classes. Then my parents moved farther west to Broomall, PA, but I never lived there as a child. I was in college at the time and certainly visited but did not live there.

SI: What are your memories of the neighborhood you grew up in? What was the neighborhood like?

JS: Row houses, working class, some professional people. My father would walk to the Upper Darby subway stop and take the train, the subway train, into work every day. It was, again, very working class, Italian-American, but not all. There were still many working-class families that were not Italian-American. It was sort of an aspirational move out of the city on the part of my parents. One or two of, it's interesting, one of two of my uncles followed, coming out of the city with their families, but they couldn't take the ruralness [laughter] of Upper Darby and retreated with their families back into Philadelphia and re-bought a home in Philadelphia, in South Philadelphia. My father did not, and he was always very anxious that his children, my sister and myself, get a good education in a good environment, and part of that was to live in the suburbs and go to public high school and then, obviously, encouraging us to continue on in education.

I walked to the grade school. I remember there were big classes. We had good teachers, strict teachers. Sports were a large part, neighborhood sports and neighborhood events growing up, but it was a big, communal, sort of supportive community in many, many ways. I just have fond memories of the public school system with very good teachers and good values and good discipline in those public schools and terrific and fun classmates, growing up. It was a simple time compared to, I think, the opportunities now. I was very much involved with being around the school, and that was the focal place. Go back to the schoolyards, play there, continue to play there in the summers, softball and every game that you can imagine, and with very wide-ranging friendships that I still have.

SI: You have one sister.

JS: I have one sister, yes. She's retired, lives in Florida now. She was a biology major in college and worked for the Environmental Protection Agency for many years as a biologist.

SI: Is she older or younger?

JS: She's my younger sister.

SI: These schools that you speak highly of, what were the names of them?

JS: Bywood Elementary School in Upper Darby was one of several elementary schools that fed the junior high school, kindergarten through six, and then Upper Darby Junior High School. I

think the name has changed now, because there are several junior high schools in the district. Then, I went to Upper Darby High School.

SI: People of your generation dealt with these huge influxes of students. Did you ever feel like it was overcrowded or that the school administrators did not do a good job dealing with the numbers of students?

JS: "This is what it was and what you did," and it was totally part of the environment and part of the accepted culture. I remember vague discussions of the parents, "Which teacher did you have?" and there were three, four, five teachers in the same grade, second grade, third grade, so there'd be multiple classes and there was always the inevitable comparisons. No, no, there were no expressions of anything but accepting what the school district said and did and organized itself and how it was taught.

My son's a teacher now in a high school in Charlotte, North Carolina and spends a great deal of time dealing with parents. It was unheard of that the parents would dare to question a teacher.

I remember the parent-teacher conferences very vividly, and I would be home waiting for them to come back from it. It was sort of like going to confession, [laughter] respect for the teacher, deep respect, and, you know, and then coming back and if the teacher said, "He could improve in these areas," then that was forcefully expressed, as opposed to saying, "Are you sure you're right about this judgment?" I'm sure there were moments of anxiety and tension, but, in general, the parental acceptance of the school district and my acceptance was complete.

SI: What subjects interested you in this early phase of your education?

JS: I was always taken with history. I also like to read, obviously, in that capacity as an academic, in English. I enjoyed math for some time, and I enjoyed science. I used to enjoy them all, but history always appealed to me and I was a voracious reader in history and to some extent then into political issues, but of all the subjects, I guess history appealed to me most in grade school. I got interested in sciences as well, until I hit organic chemistry in college. [laughter] The inorganic was fine. I got to the organic, [laughter] and that put me on a different path.

SI: Were you involved in any other activities like the Boy Scouts or anything like that?

JS: Yes, we did Cub Scouts and the Boy Scouts, yes. The Catholic Church was a big influence in my family for a long time, so a lot of activity revolved around the Catholic Church, going to mass every Sunday. I went to public school, so I had to go to catechism class for first communion and confirmation. I would go to those sessions, and they were taught by nuns. We thought how blessed we were in the public schools that we weren't dealing with nuns, because that was another, different even, level of discipline and rigor. There was a good deal of activity around that.

I worked from being a young boy on. My father had a good, steady job, modest means, and he always taught us the importance of working. From about the age of twelve, I worked. I delivered newspapers; I delivered the *Evening Bulletin*, a now defunct afternoon paper from

Philadelphia. I delivered it seven days a week, Monday through Saturday daily edition and Sunday newspaper. I did that from age twelve almost through high school. It was good discipline. I earned money, a little money. I had to pick up fifty-or-so papers every afternoon and make my rounds and deliver the papers, keep the financial records, collect the money on Friday nights, square up with the branch manager on Saturday, turn in my receipts. I think we got a penny a copy. I think it was a penny a copy was the newsboys' rate, so I made maybe five, ten dollars a week. I did that steadily for all those years. It did give me an opportunity to earn a scholarship from the *Evening Bulletin*, a five-hundred-dollar scholarship to go to college. I competed among all the newsboys in the Philadelphia area, and somehow I got that. It was good discipline, and I read the paper. I had the paper every day. I read it. There were always extra copies around, and it taught me a lot. It taught me a lot about people, service, the importance of being punctual, the importance of being honest, the importance of being on time. It was good.

Then, I worked another job. I worked during summers, also, at a local grocery store. There was such a thing as a grocery store in the neighborhood. I used to be the gofer boy in the grocery store. It was a tiny operation on the corner, but they had everything. The women would call in their orders. I look back on it. It was terrific; women didn't have to go to the store, housewives, then, my mother. You would call in your order to the grocer. They would, whatever the order was, they would fill the order, including butchering. There was a butcher, and so you could get cut meat. I would help fill the order, put it in boxes, put it in the wagon. I would pull the wagon to the person's house, put the groceries up the steps into the kitchen, put the bags on the table. She'd give me fifteen cents, a dime, and they didn't have to leave the house. The order came to them, not like today.

Think of it now. You drive to the supermarket, right. You go through the supermarket. You put everything in the cart. You take everything out of the cart. You put it on the checkout place. It goes through the checkout. You put it back in the cart. You take it out to the car. You put it in the car. You take it out of the car and into the house. All that was different. You didn't have to do any of that. There were supermarkets, and my mother ultimately shopped in a supermarket. I worked in that grocery store. That was very vivid. The owners were strict. I had to be there and do everything, clean the butcher block.

SI: How many hours would you work?

JS: In the summer, I would be working almost full time for the week. The *Evening Bulletin*, the delivery of that took me an hour, hour-and-a-half to do every day.

SI: Were you doing them both simultaneously during the summer?

JS: In the summer, probably yes.

SI: You mentioned that the Catholic Church was very important to you. Were you involved in any organized activities through there, any Catholic Youth Organization activities?

JS: There were sports. We played sports. They had trips and various things for young people. I remember a religious focus to it vividly, too, as well the activities. The mass was all in Latin. I

didn't have a clue what was being said, but it was very, you know, at the time, very mysterious, and you identified with it over time. Now, all that's changed, when I came of age, but as a child, these were very vivid memories and experiences. The priests were sort of mysterious people.

SI: In your community, were there celebrations for feast days and that sort of thing?

JS: No.

SI: Did you celebrate with feasts with all of your family?

JS: It was not that Italian. That was more of a city thing. I remember my aunt sending my father birthday cards, what I thought were birthday cards, but they weren't birthday cards. They were cards on his name day, Saint Joseph's Day, and that was sort of traditional. The food was very much oriented towards the church. Fridays were meatless, and that was a big deal. Christmases had their food agendas and protocols, and it was all very, very vivid. You could either survive that stuff or be scarred by it, and I came out, I think, okay, somewhat scarred but still basically on the plus side.

SI: Were there other aspects of growing up Italian that stand out, traditions that stand out in your home?

JS: Family, very focused on the immediate family, the extended family, grandparents, respect for the parents, and the work ethic. They worked hard. They came up in hard times, many of them young people during the depression, my aunts and uncles. Again, there were sixteen of them. The work ethic, the importance of working and the good fortune of being able to work and having work. So, that was stressed, who was doing what at work and what were they doing, and then to all the cousins, and there were many cousins. Although my parents had big families, in their generation, the families were relatively small, two and three children, but when you had eight on each side, there was a lot of cousins. So, what were the cousins doing, and how were they doing it? So, there were close connections with the cousins for many, many years.

SI: I would assume by then there was no keeping up with the language or foods or things like that.

JS: No, my parents didn't speak Italian. My father could struggle through some words, but, no, they spoke English and they never spoke Italian. It's a regret. I wish we had the alternate language. I took languages in school, but Italian wasn't offered and I didn't feel that I missed it. When I could take it in college, I didn't. I had Spanish in high school, four years, and two more in college. With my Ph.D. exams, I always remember in economics for the language requirements, you had to have two languages. I don't know, Paul, if you had to have two languages to show proficiency. Just when my class came in, they allowed us to take a math test instead of one of the languages. Economics is heavily mathematical, so everybody took the math test. I still had one language to do, and I did it in Spanish.

PC: I am actually surprised that they let you take Spanish. When I was considering going into math as a graduate student, they told me the only language you could have was German.

JS: German, yes.

PC: [laughter] Yes, it was daunting.

SI: You said sports were important growing up. Were there particular sports you were interested in?

JS: Played them all, played touch football, a lot of softball, a lot of baseball, basketball intensely for many, many years. I played basketball until I was an assistant professor here with the graduate students. I played here with the graduate school softball team. I still play softball every week. Tennis. It was very, very much a sports orientation, but it was pick-up sports. It wasn't organized sports. In school, I was on the track team for a while. I wasn't very good. Sports were very important in terms of participation. I spent a lot of time in sports.

SI: You said that you became aware of the larger world around you through delivery of the newspapers. That would be in about the mid-1950s.

JS: Yes, I was twelve when I started to deliver the paper, and so I was twelve in '55, 1955.

SI: As the Cold War started to develop, were you following that?

JS: Oh, you bet. Oh, it was so vivid. It was so scary. The brilliant flash of light, and you had ten seconds to hide. I still remember that today, yes. The fear I had for my parents that we were going to be blown up. The air raid drills in schools, "Get under your desk. Put your head between your legs. Cover your head." Very, very vivid. Up through the Cuban Missile Crisis, which I remember, I was at the University of Pennsylvania, just the fear of what could happen. [Editor's Note: The Cuban Missile Crisis of October 1962 occurred after the U.S. discovered that the Soviet Union was installing nuclear missile sites in Cuba. As a result, the U.S. and the Soviet Union engaged in a thirteen-day standoff, until the Soviet Union agreed to remove the missile installations in exchange for American military concessions in Europe.]

Yes, as a young boy, it was very much in the newsreels. You'd go to the movies and you would see the newsreels, the nuclear testing. The vivid pictures of Eastern Europe and the Churchillian Iron Curtain, all very much vivid in our lives. You would feel it. I always remember lying in bed and saying, "What would that flash of light look like? Would my parents be aware of what was happening?" It was a very scary time, particularly, I guess, on children that were sensitive to that. Teachers, I don't remember any sugarcoating of it, that this was all very realistic, very possible, could happen, likely to happen. Up through films like *The Manchurian Candidate*, *Dr. Strangelove*, and I, a young person then, and it was still that sense of vividness, real, fear and threat, very much so. [Editor's Note: In a 1946 speech, former British Prime Minister Winston Churchill coined the term "Iron Curtain" to describe the division of Soviet-dominated Eastern Europe from non-Communist Western Europe.]

SI: When you went to high school, what high school was it?

JS: It was Upper Darby High School, public school, big, big public school. Our class had three-four hundred graduates, maybe more, very big, big class. It was tenth, eleventh and twelfth at that time. Junior school was seven, eight, nine, and high school was tenth, eleventh, twelfth.

SI: The same subjects you mentioned before were still the same ones that interested you.

JS: Yes, I was interested in all. I liked geometry a great deal. I liked the sciences. Just as in college, you remember your really good teachers. It was [an] emphasis on the college curriculum, college preparation. Everybody focused on it.

SI: Were there tracks?

JS: Yes. There were none of these sort of euphemisms now. There was academic track and then there was a commercial track and there was general track. There was the slow reading group and the medium reading group, and they called them by that. It was not the, whatever they are now, green, yellow and whatever. [laughter]

SI: You said going to the public high school was very important in your father's eyes and in your mother's eyes.

JS: Yes.

SI: Did they always encourage you to think about college?

JS: Very much so, yes, and they made a decision. I really wasn't privy to the discussions, but it was more implicit for me not to send me to the Catholic schools, which was very much an option in Upper Darby in the parochial schools, but they made a decision. The school, the proximity, the grade school was literally a half a block away, and I could walk to it as a young boy. Even as a young boy, I walked there without my mother accompanying me, and maybe that was as simple as that. They were very much that we would go to college and we would prepare and do our best, and that was always very much encouraged.

PC: Was that equally so for your sister?

JS: Yes, yes, very much so.

SI: Were you involved in any other activities?

JS: Sure, yes. I was very much involved in the school newspaper. I wrote for the school newspaper for all three years, and the senior year, I was the sports editor. We ran a weekly high school paper. We did it all ourselves. We had a terrific faculty advisor, Mrs. Slick. She was the journalism teacher, and she was strict too and took no nonsense. It was highly meritorious. You had to compete for all those jobs. I was very, very happy to get sports editor, because I always liked to write, and sports were very important. I produced this sports page every week, and I had reporters coming in. We had to do the headlines and almost set the type. We had to count the lines and count the letters in the headlines. It wasn't digitally done. We had to measure the

columns and edit everything, and we did it all ourselves each week. Most high school papers, at that time, were monthly. We produced a weekly paper. It's called the *Acorn*. That was a very great experience, because, again, more discipline, a lot of work. You had your full coursework and you had to do this newspaper. We wrote it after school and all week long, and there were deadlines on Wednesday. All the copy had to be in, and Thursday, everything had to be edited and get to the printers. That was terrific. Honors society, which was active doing things. School elections, I never ran for anything, but I helped people run, I remember.

SI: What was your school like in terms of diversity? Was it mostly Italian-American?

JS: No, it was not. Upper Darby, at that time, immigrants were new into Upper Darby. It was mostly, they would be multiple-generation Anglo background, Anglo-Americans, most of the students. Some Italian-Americans, some Irish-Americans, and it was almost all white, high school. No, it was reflecting a much different cross section of America at that time. It would have been, I would say, more of a white, Anglo-Saxon, Protestant student body, certainly the academic curriculum dominated by that. With this, some Italian-Americans, but, again, they would be second generation like myself. My parents were born here and children of that generation.

SI: What do you mean by the curriculum was dominated by them?

JS: Well, almost all the students in the academic curriculum would be the Anglo-Saxon.

SI: All right.

JS: Yes. The part of Upper Darby that I came from was a row-house, middle, working-class community, but a great deal of the rest of the Upper Darby School District was single-family homes on large lots and very, very much established.

SI: Within the high school, did all the students get along? Were there any divisions showing up?

JS: No, no, nothing in the way of ethnic or racial divisions, no. There were sort of class divisions possibly, but there was no animosity. There was no strife. There were inevitable problems among individual students, but there was no sort of organized feeling of us and them. Now, that may be somewhat from the academic-curriculum perspective. I don't know how it was looked on the other side. It wasn't the nerd issue, the nerd versus the rest. There was sort of a class theme, and it was sort of accepted.

SI: You went to high school from 1956 to 1960.

JS: I graduated in 1960. I was young, because I started public school at the age of four-and-a-half. I was a January baby. Somehow I got into kindergarten that year that I would be turning five in January, but I started in September. I think that would not be done now. My parents, I guess, were not cognizant of the research that shows you shouldn't do that with young boys. So,

I started early, and I graduated early. I think I was probably not even eighteen when I graduated high school. Maybe I had just turned eighteen.

SI: A major event during that time was Sputnik being launched. That had such an impact. At that time, was there more emphasis being put on science and math?

JS: I don't recall that translating down to us. I certainly remember the event. I remember the Eisenhower years very vividly. I remember the campaigns, Adlai Stevenson, Dwight Eisenhower. I was sort of the sole *Where's Waldo?* Democrat in the class. [laughter] My parents were Democrats, and that's what I absorbed. There may have been three of us in classes of forty or thirty. It was sobering, that Sputnik event, because the rhetoric and the ethos was that America was the dominant military and dominant political force. This was a very sobering event. [Editor's Note: On October 4, 1957, the Soviet Union launched the first satellite, Sputnik, triggering the space race as another dimension of Cold War competition between the United States and Soviet Union. The event led to efforts in America to emphasize math and the sciences in educational curricula. Republican Dwight D. Eisenhower defeated Democrat Adlai Stevenson in 1952 and again in 1956 for the United States presidency. Eisenhower served as president from 1953 to 1961.]

SI: Were there teachers encouraging you, one, to go to college, and, two, to go to any particular college?

JS: Teachers weren't really much involved, at least from my perspective. I don't recall that. I was in the academic curriculum. It was expected. You would apply. We may have had some counseling. I don't recall specifically. There was a great deal of discussion of where you applied and where you want to go, but I don't remember the school being a force behind helping or shaping that decision.

SI: How did the opportunity to go to the University of Pennsylvania come up?

JS: I applied, yes. I wanted to apply, and Penn was on the list of schools. I think I applied to Penn State. I applied to the Catholic schools, interestingly enough, Villanova, St. Joseph's, I believe. I got in all the schools, and it was never really a question. My father and I talked about it, I remember, and it was, "Penn, go to the best school." Dad said, "I'll pay. We'll pay. We want you to go to Penn." I wanted to go to Penn, too. I remember visiting. Penn was very, very appealing. That was a terrific decision, and my father very much knew the advice he was giving was very sound. I never looked back. It was terrific.

SI: As you were preparing for college, what did you see for yourself in the future?

JS: I guess I always thought teaching appealed to me. I was impressed by my teachers, and that continued, certainly, at Penn. Not at the college level. I thought about teaching maybe at the high school level, but I was open to any type of professional type of career. My father talked about the accounting profession and, I remember, never pushed me but was interested in me knowing about that. I never took an accounting course in college to his, I guess, disappointment, unexpressed, but I did major in economics, which was business enough and good enough.

That came early. I was taken with economics in the first semester of my first year, but I was taken with a lot of subjects. I remember being overwhelmed with religious thought. I had a terrific professor who opened the world of non-Christian religions to me, which I knew zero about if zero is possible, or negative about, then it probably was negative, because you had sort of hearsay. That was fascinating. The Spanish literature's fascinating. I had American studies with a Professor Garvin at Penn, and, boy, that just blew me over. We talked about painting and American art and architecture and literature. I always liked talking to Angus Kress Gillespie and his colleagues here at Rutgers in the American studies program. Every subject was just fascinating. I liked biology, the big, big Penn labs. You would sit in the amphitheaters, and they would be lecturing. Before all the digital instruction, it was all done on blackboards and demonstration labs and terrific professors there. Psychology, magic. Penn had full faculty, full professors, teaching those first-year classes.

My economics professor was Professor Herb Levine, mesmerizing and just was terrific, and I'm so grateful to Penn for enriching me. I didn't know what to choose. I really loved economics. It was exciting. I liked the questions that were asked. I liked the methodology, the combination of the quantitative methods and the analytical, but in a policy sense and in a social science sense of impacting people. The micro fascinated me and the macro fascinated me even more, but all the other courses did as well. I don't think there was a class that I didn't get intellectually excited about. That first year of college was just so eye-opening, and I did well. I kept becoming interested in just the subject matter, and that became different.

In college, I was not as connected to the big college. I wasn't interested or good in sports. I didn't want to join a fraternity, although I rushed for a fraternity, and why I did that, I don't know, because I guess some of the people in the dorms were doing it. Then, I turned it down, and I was sort of looked upon as an outcast. I should have never done that, gone out to rush. They liked me, because I had good grades, I guess, or something. I really focused on the academics.

As for my first year on, it became all very interesting and challenging and stimulating, and I was out of the mainstream there. They were involved in the fraternities, and the people that I got to know, although many of them worked hard, too, yes. I was very academically focused from the beginning in college. Penn was fabulous. It was intellectually just fabulous. I was just so excited. The history class, I think I mentioned to you, Paul, Roy Nichols. It was all real, and I just couldn't wait to talk about it to people and read and study. I studied hard. I still didn't know what I was going to do and didn't know for a long time.

I became an economics major. I also majored so that I could teach and become education qualified to teach, so that was my beginning to look to teach social studies, if you pushed me to say what I was preparing for, but probably with a great deal of flexibility, so I would get my education credentials and be an economics major. I took all the courses in the Wharton School, and you're there with all the Wharton-focused people and I was looking at it a little bit differently.

The senior year came, and I started to think about graduate school. I interviewed for positions, and again, I had a good academic record, so I had a good job offer from IBM. I remember being interviewed by them. They took me to their headquarters in New York and put on a big, full-court press, again, because I think my academic record was appealing to them, and offered me a good position.

Then, I went through a very rigorous interview with the Central Intelligence Agency to be in their intelligence area and study economies, and that was really rigorous. I remember we were supposed to take an exam, and so I showed up for this exam and it wasn't like an exam that I thought. I thought it was going to be a group of us writing an exam, but it was a one-on-one for hours and all sorts of questions. They offered me a position.

I applied then to the University of Pennsylvania. I was encouraged by some of the economics faculty at Penn to apply to graduate study at Penn in economics, and I remember doing that and then talking to a few of the faculty members and ultimately making the decision, not working for IBM or the CIA and going to graduate school, but it was because of the economics faculty. They said, "You will have more options. You can take those private sector jobs or even the public sector job. You get more training." I got into the Ph.D. program, and I had support, which was wonderful. I had a research fellowship, and I was assigned to a faculty member to do work for him. I was part of a whole group in an economic research forecasting unit of graduate students, and that was a terrific decision as well. The decision to go to Penn and the decision to stay at Penn and do graduate economics, Ph.D. program, were two good decisions.

SI: During your undergraduate years, was there a particular member in the economics department that was a mentor?

JS: Yes, Herb Levine, Professor Levine, Herb Levine. He taught comparative economic systems. He taught us micro and macro to begin with. Then, I took a course with him on the history of the Soviet economy, which was fascinating. You thought you knew a little about economics, and then you find out that other countries did something completely different. So, that was fascinating, learning how they organized their economy functions. He was an expert there, spoke Russian, terrific scholar and a wonderful teacher. He encouraged me, and then I met others, too, other members of their faculty. They encouraged me, as I continued to take courses in the department, to pursue economics. As a graduate student, I was taught by Professor Lawrence Klein, Nobel laureate, on forecasting models, fascinating. Robert Summers, the father of Mr. Summers, the recent secretary. [Editor's Note: Lawrence Summers served as the treasury secretary under President Bill Clinton and more recently as the director of the National Economic Council in the administration of President Barack Obama.] Professor Richard Easterlin on economic development. He's still at the University of Southern California, I believe, still teaching. They were just terrific. It was the key, and that's what I always thought as to why I became an administrator. The key to this stuff is good faculty. [laughter] It's the key to making an institution, and you can build the faculty by each single appointment consecutively. Nothing substitutes for that. These are complex organizations. They're certainly enormously complex to manage and run well, but it all begins with good faculty.

I think the lesson from Penn that I drew for here was to have those faculty teach and teach undergraduates. I always used to think in this job about my Penn experience and the lessons of being with that super faculty. If you can make each faculty appointment as good or better than the previous faculty appointment, and you keep doing that consistently across all your departments and units and you do it for several generations, you're going to have a hell of an institution. That's why those decisions are so important in how you interface with the faculty and maximize their intellectual environment for them to thrive and do their thing.

SI: I do not know much about economics, but at the time that you studied, would you characterize the University of Pennsylvania faculty as being in a particular school?

JS: Yes, as an undergraduate, you probably didn't have too much of that. [That was] more in the graduate training. They were empirical, so they did a lot of modeling and estimation, they were heavily oriented towards empirical testing, big macro models of the economy, which they would estimate. They probably were Keynesian in their orientation with respect to policy, although there were some there that were not. I didn't feel that we were sort of proselytized to from a perspective of a school of thought like the Chicago people. It was empirical and technical and evidence based and inferences from statistical testing in a very sophisticated way, the latest quantitative techniques, sophisticated computer use, large-scale models, empirical results, testing hypothesis. [Editor's Note: Keynesian refers to the school of thought in economics based on the theories of British economist John Maynard Keynes. The Chicago school of thought in economics originated with economist Milton Friedman at the University of Chicago.]

SI: Did you have to write a thesis as an undergraduate?

JS: No.

SI: Okay.

JS: No, I did not.

PC: I am surprised.

JS: Yes, I'm surprised, too. We wrote a lot, but not a thesis.

SI: You described earlier how you did not get involved with too many other activities. Were there any other activities?

JS: In college?

SI: Yes. Were you involved in any activities that you want to mention?

JS: I remember being a member of the Newman Club, which was the Catholic organization, for a while. It provided some social outlets. I attended the Penn sports. That was big. I played a lot of intramural sports. I was a reasonably good athlete, as small as I was, and I played a lot. That

was still very important. I attended the Penn functions, but I wasn't involved in the organized social life of the campus.

SI: Was political activity or awareness very prominent on campus?

JS: Oh, absolutely, yes, very much so. I remember the Kennedy-Nixon debates. Oh, yes, it was a hotbed, sure, like all the Ivy League schools, very intense and very mixed. Penn drew an urban type of student. It was liberal, the student body, progressive, to a large extent, and, yes, very alive with political discussion and activity, which I used to go to the events and listen. Like Rutgers now, every day, there was something to do intellectually and interesting. I tried to do that, and I studied a lot. I just studied a lot. I didn't find college work easy. I had to work, so I put a lot of time in. [Editor's Note: Televised debates between Democrat John F. Kennedy and Republican Richard Nixon took place during the presidential campaign of 1960. In the first debate, Nixon, not wearing makeup, looked pale and sickly to viewers, while Kennedy, tan and wearing makeup, appeared fit and young and went on to narrowly win the presidency in November.]

PC: Do you remember classmates who went down South for Freedom Summer in 1964 to register African American voters?

JS: No.

PC: Does that ring bell?

JS: No.

PC: Okay. Me neither, where I was.

JS: No, no. It maybe just was from where I was, yes.

PC: Yes.

SI: Up to this point of your life when you were in Philadelphia, had you ventured much outside of the Philadelphia-Upper Darby area?

JS: No, I was very insular. No, vacations were oriented towards the East Coast, as a family. I did a little traveling with college friends, but mostly New York City. That was sort of the goal and I took advantage of the museums. Washington, D.C., I remember going there a good number of times to go to the museums. I got interested, again, thank Penn, in classical music, art history, things that I didn't know about in high school. I took advantage of the museums in Philadelphia and in New York and Washington. I regret that I never was able to take an art history course. I made up for it later. I sat in on Rutgers courses here. Do you remember James Subblebine, Paul, at all? I used to sit in on his course, just sit in and take it all in. Again, Penn gave me that. Going to the National Gallery of Art in Washington and the Smithsonian, very, very vivid, the Metropolitan Museum in New York. These were really vivid learning experiences. I still do. No, traveling was not something I did. It was not until graduate school

that I'd do much more traveling, and then I married an English woman and we have done a lot of traveling. I met her in graduate school, and we have had two sabbaticals in England at Oxford and traveled in Europe.

I developed a little later in life, actually, when I was here, bird watching interests, so I am an avid bird watcher. My wife calls me the Jehovah's Witness of bird watching. I'm always interested in converting [other people]. Would you like to go bird watching, Shaun? [laughter]

PC: Did you go with George Levine?

JS: I know George, yes, I know George. George is a bird watcher. [Editor's Note: George Levine, now a Professor Emeritus of English, served as a Rutgers English professor and administrator from 1968 to 2006.]

PC: Yes.

JS: He wrote a very good book for Rutgers Press on bird watching, *Lifebirds*, in 1997. Now and then, I see him in the field. He still goes. There's a whole Rutgers birding group. Joanna Burger in ornithology, she's a scientist. She's the real scientist. Charlie Leck, who used to be in biology, and Lee Merrill from Cook College. He was the dean. He and I were good bird watchers, and we'd travel. So, we would go all over the country bird watching, southeast Arizona, Puget Sound, Texas coast, the Brownsville dump on the tip of the country, because at the Brownsville dump, you could see something called the Chihuahuan raven. It was the only place in the country you could see it. These are not highlights-of-America tour, [laughter] Florida, all over, Utah. I've been to a lot of places in the country. I still bird watch a lot now, and I do a lot of bird-watching travel and bird watching everywhere I go, because all you need is a pair of binoculars. A pair of binoculars and you look up and you see. So, that's traveling. My wife travels back to England frequently, and I go with her now and then.

SI: I was curious about the CIA job. You got pretty deep into the interview process. Did you apply?

JS: I applied, yes. They were on campus, and I applied. I made it through the first couple rounds, and then it got serious. That intrigued me, because it was it looked like it'd be interesting work. I remember they would talk about professional development, being able to go to school, and it was interesting. I never questioned that it was important and appropriate work to do. My judgment to go to graduate school, rather than take that job, was based on, "I think I should go to graduate school first and then possibly go work for them or the private sector."

SI: I do not know how much more time you have.

JS: A little bit more. How're we doing?

PC: It is about two-thirty.

JS: Yes, about two-thirty. How are you doing, okay?

SI: I am okay.

JS: Is this taking you where you want to go?

SI: Yes, absolutely. I was wondering if you could kind of describe as you went through graduate school, how did your interests develop into what you studied?

JS: I had the good fortune--the curriculum was very rigorous, wide-ranging, but it was focused, again, a good deal on measurement, and that was under the word of econometrics. That appealed to me, to try to be able to capture in an empirical manner the economic phenomena that we were conceptualizing and putting in theoretical terms, to test in fact what was the responsiveness of quantity demanded by consumers to changes in prices to income. How do you measure tastes? How do you estimate a demand function? How do you measure the impact of a tax cut, of a tax increase? Would the macro policies that are theoretically described, would they actually work? … It all came down to theory. So, I was very intrigued with the measurement, and I had a thesis advisor who was an empiricist, an empirical economist, and that's what appealed to me and that's what I ended up doing, measuring.

Ultimately, I had an eclectic interest in economics. I was focused in my thesis on an environmental aspect to economics, measuring demand for public recreation and then trying to relate that demand to how to manage the demand and to justify public expenditures for open space and for the pursuit of undamaged habitats and for open space protection broadly defined in terms of the integrity of ecological systems. So, that link of an outdoor public policy with empirical research got me interested in policy. When I became a junior faculty member here, I taught environmental economics and I taught econometrics for many years among the courses that I taught, and that became my undergraduate teaching specialty.

My research was pretty eclectic. I did a lot of different types of research, focused on environmental economics and policy but not entirely. Public finance appealed to me. Then, I had an opportunity quite early on in my career here. I think I was still an assistant professor. The chair of the department, Monroe Berkowitz, and good for Monroe, he had multiple choices to do this, he had an opportunity to recommend somebody to become a member of the New Jersey Council of Economic Advisors, and the Council of Economic Advisors, at the time, was a three-person council. It usually consisted of a faculty member from Princeton, a faculty member from Rutgers, and a private-sector economist. That council was established by law, and it was advisory to the governor and the legislature. A vacancy arose on that council; the Rutgers part of it became vacant. I never knew who was the previous holder or how that came about, whether it was a vacancy for some time. He asked me if I would be interested, and it may have been because he couldn't get anybody else in on the faculty to do it. I accepted, because I thought I should accept when the chairman said, "Would you like to do this? It would be good for you and good for the department" So, I got deeply involved over the years in the economics of New Jersey and developed, therefore, some expertise simply by learning by doing and then reading the literature, of course, and getting involved in disciplined aspects of it, of state and local economic development. Maybe we can talk about that at [the] next session, if you want, in depth.

SI: Yes.

JS: That became a very big part of what I do , and I still do it and did it when I was in the administration and did it while I was a junior faculty member, when I was a tenured faculty member and even now. I'm not in an official role, but I still have an advisory role at times to people.

SI: Just one more question. It is interesting to me that so early on you were involved in the environmental aspects of this. Was there something that propelled you in that direction?

JS: Yes, that's a good question. My interest in science, in biology, in particular. That was always an interest of mine, the natural systems, and the environment now, then it would have been the biological natural habitat, at that time. I discovered there's a huge economic side to this, benefits and costs and the role of policy, but it was from that, being interested in science, in biology.

SI: At the same time, were you aware of the growing environmental movement?

JS: Well, it developed as I was coming of age in the discipline, yes. The first Earth Day, April 22, was what? 1970. So, my Ph.D.'s '68. There was a burgeoning environmental discipline within economics during the late '60s of people that were looking at this. They were focused in an organization called Resources for the Future in Washington. It still exists. It is a very, very reputable, objective, independent environmental research group, and their work was very interesting to me. My thesis was in that area, because of the empirical work that they were doing.

SI: Well, we have kept you a little bit longer.

JS: No, that's fine. That's good.

SI: We appreciate it.

JS: I hope I wasn't too boring.

SI: No, no. Thank you very much.

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

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