

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH WILLIAM TRUSHEIM

FOR THE

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INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This continues an interview series with Dr. William Trusheim, on June 1, 2020. I am Shaun Illingworth in Hightstown, New Jersey, and if you could just share where you are.

William Trusheim: I am Bill Trusheim, and I am located in West Milford, New Jersey.

SI: This is for the Rutgers Oral History Archives Class of 1970 interview program. Thanks again for meeting with me. Last time, we were in the middle of talking about your experiences with the band at Rutgers, which you noted were rather transformative for you. I want to get into the aspects of running it and being an officer in the band. Could you start by just telling me a little bit about how you got into the leadership of the band?

WT: I think that during my sophomore year, I became more active in doing some volunteer things for the band connected with administering the band program. For my last two years at Rutgers, my junior and senior year, I was vice president of the band. That involved recruiting, doing public relations work, working with the printed football gameday program (the band part of the football program), and other things that weren't marching-band related. Also tasks that were related to the pep band and the performances of the pep band at home and at some away games, a lot of away games, as a matter of fact, and the concert programs.

In my junior year, we went to California on a California tour, and there was a tremendous amount of work involved in that. Actually, we flew on a 707 and I think there were 129 possible seats. We chartered the plane and we took 129 people. That was all the band members, plus some support people. While that wasn't my prime responsibility, I was certainly helpful in some aspects of that. Going on to an endeavor such as that, it took a lot of planning and a lot of work, and I was just a small part of that planning.

As I said before, I think one of the things that was critical to me personally in my development was learning the leadership qualities that I was able to develop as part of that band. That really taught me how to be a band director when I started my career, more so than any coursework that I ever took. As it has turned out for my entire working life, I have always been in leadership positions. That was really significant, and to have a mentor like Scott Whitener to model some of my own behavior and my own thinking really made a big difference. He certainly wasn't the only mentor in my career, I had others, but he was a very significant one, and from a musical standpoint, he's still my mentor today. That was an important part of my development. [Editor's Note: Dr. Scott Whitener is a Professor Emeritus of Music at Rutgers, having served as a faculty member from 1966 to 2013. He became Rutgers University Director of Bands in 1966.]

One of the things that I really appreciated was that while Scott was a professor and the Director of Bands and all of that, he always gave us the feeling, as students in the band, and particularly those of us who had leadership positions, that we were all working toward the same goal. That was an important lesson to me, and I think my leadership style, since then, was to lead by example and I think that's what I learned from Scott, or one at least one of the things I learned from Scott. So, those experiences were tremendously valuable. I guess they're a blessing and a curse, because even in retirement, I'm in leadership positions in three or four organizations now. Once people understand you have those skills, they depend on you to do it. Again, the thing

that's good about it is that even in retirement, I feel like I'm being productive, and that's an important feeling. You still feel like you have something to contribute and make a difference. I always believe that one of the most important lessons you could teach your students was that they could make a difference.

I think it's important for all of us to feel like we're making a difference, and that's certainly important commentary in our times right now, if you look at what's happened over the last weekend. The difference that many people are making is not a positive one, and we really need more people to make a positive difference and to advocate for change so that every person's important. There is not one person who's expendable. Unfortunately, some segments of our society don't see it that way. It's very distressing and I don't want to get into that too deeply, but I do think that making a difference is important. I always try to do that. [Editor's Note: Dr. Trusheim is referencing the protests across the United States in response to the murder of George Floyd by a Minneapolis police officer on May 25, 2020. Police Officer Derek Chauvin was found guilty of Floyd's murder on April 20, 2021.]

SI: You have talked about recruiting. How would you go about doing that for the band?

WT: There was a set procedure for doing it--I don't know if this still happens when students enroll at Rutgers--but as a rising freshman, part of the acceptance package was to fill out forms about possible interest, whether it was athletic teams or whether it was activities, things like that. Of course, band was part of that. The band would get these cards from the students, or perhaps a list of students, I can't remember which, but we got a list of students who had indicated on those activities cards that they had band experience or musical experience and that they had some interest in exploring the band program. Once we got those lists, Scott Whitener would write the letters and we would send out those letters to those students who had professed an interest in band, and we would then recruit them for the program. We didn't do recruiting outside of the normal acceptance at Rutgers. It wasn't that kind of recruiting, but it was recruiting within the incoming freshman class or the sophomore class or whomever.

At times, we'd also try a second chance on some of the people that didn't sign up the first time around because obviously filling out the instrumentation was important. Of course, if students expressed an interest once they were on campus, that was also something that we responded to, and we certainly tried to encourage them to give it a shot and come and audition. The bands, even marching band, was by audition, so you didn't just walk in and join. The auditions for marching band were pretty much placement, as long as they could play reasonably well, but for the other organizations, it was a little bit more competitive.

In the four years that I was there, it became more and more competitive, as the program built through those four years. That was how we did the recruiting and it was directed at students who were already on campus, and word of mouth. Somebody in the band would say, "Hey, I have a friend who used to play and would be interested." Then, we'd reach out to them and encourage them to come in and take an audition. We built the band really starting from my freshman year. The marching band had forty-eight players my freshman year, because there was a big change in style between what had gone on before and what we were doing that year. As for the students that had been in the band previously, some of them did stay in, of course, but many of them

departed. I guess they had some allegiance to their previous director or whatever. We had to pretty much start from scratch in 1966, but we ended up going to California with a hundred-piece block. We were able to build the program fairly quickly, and our goal was a hundred players. We never really looked to expand above that in the era when I was in the band, which was 1966 through 1970. We did make that goal and we maintained the hundred in the marching band, and then of course we had all the other groups within the band program, which were considerably smaller, obviously, typically, the concert band and the wind ensemble and the symphonic band, the other bands in the program.

Again, the recruiting piece really did apply to marching band mainly and to also the concert approach as well. The one difference between the marching band and the concert groups was the marching band was all male at the time. Women could join the marching band in the early '70s, which was a good thing. Of course, there were women who could be in the concert groups, so that was another thing in terms of recruiting. We talked to students from Douglass and they would join the concert bands as well. [Editor's Note: Rutgers College became coed in 1972.]

We were able to be pretty successful in building. Of course, by today's standard, in the Big Ten, a hundred-piece band is very small, but Rutgers' band isn't a hundred pieces anymore. It's several hundred now. So, it's a different time. We were modeled after the Big Ten bands of that era from the moment Scott Whitener walked on the campus. It was ironic to me when Rutgers joined the Big Ten. We had sort of joined the Big Ten philosophically in the band program in 1966. [laughter] It took the University a little while longer. [Editor's Note: The Big Ten is a college athletic conference that was established in 1896. Rutgers joined the conference in 2014.]

SI: That is interesting that you were recruiting for the other bands from Douglass and I assume the other colleges. What were the other?

WT: There really weren't other colleges at the time.

SI: The Ag School was not separate?

WT: Well, at that point, it was Rutgers College and Douglass and then Cook College. There was no Livingston; it didn't exist at that point. Again, it was a very different experience at Rutgers in that era. Again, you're talking about Rutgers College with an enrollment of 5,900, compared to the number of students who are on the New Brunswick campus today, a big difference.

SI: Were there other student leaders that you recall from this period?

WT: In band?

SI: Yes.

WT: Oh, yes, there was a whole set of officers. As I say, I was vice president for a couple of years. We had a president, a business manager and an equipment staff. There were some administrative assistants, which were also student positions. It was a kind of a joint effort. We

all kind of worked together. As I said, I, along with two of my roommates--well, actually, more than two over the years--were also band officers. I could say that we probably put in forty hours a week of volunteer time to help run the program. That's how we all learned to do this job. My two closest friends and roommates and I all ended up being band directors and two of the three of us ended up being principals and superintendents in the end. It was a good learning experience and it was very rewarding and we really thought we were doing something important, which really makes it a lot easier to put in all that effort.

SI: I want to get into some of the events that you participated in. The California trip sounds very interesting. Can you tell me more about where you went and your experiences there?

WT: Sure, absolutely. We were invited to California. Actually, I think that the band program was invited to California quite a few years previous to represent the College Football Hall of Fame and the hundredth anniversary of college football in the Rose Bowl Parade on January 1, 1969. I believe that offer was proffered in the early '60s to give everyone some time to prepare for it. This was something that was kind of on the table, and it was something that we ended up having to work toward. I believe one of the reasons why there was a change in leadership in the band was in preparation for something as significant as that. Instead of just doing the Rose Bowl, we also looked into other possibilities out there. We were able to perform at the halftime in the East-West Shrine Game. I believe that was the 28th of December that year, if my recollection is correct. [Editor's Note: The first-ever college football game was played by Rutgers and Princeton on November 6, 1869. On September 27, 1969, the two teams faced off in the centennial game, and Rutgers won 29-0.]

Then, of course, the Rose Bowl Parade was January 1st. The East-West Shrine Game was in San Francisco, and the Rose Bowl Parade was in Pasadena, which was in the Los Angeles area. So, it also included a trip from San Francisco down to Southern California, which we did overnight by bus. We went right from the East-West Shrine game--that was at Candlestick Park in San Francisco--straight down to UCLA, which is where we stayed for the Southern California part of the trip.

It was really an interesting experience because I had never been to California before that, and it was exciting just to go to California and to have a little bit of time to spend there and get a whole sense of what was going on in the other side of the country. It was an exciting prospect, but it was also an exciting idea for us to be on national television, both for the Rose Bowl Parade and for the East-West Shrine Game, because the halftime was televised and of course the Rose Bowl Parade is always televised. The whole idea of doing that was exciting for us and also for our friends and family too because they could see us on television, which was kind of cool.

We had put together a show for the East-West Shrine Game that was commemorating the hundredth anniversary of college football, so it featured some of the big rivalries in college football. We, of course, did a tribute to the first game, Rutgers and Princeton. One of the features there was Army-Notre Dame, which always had a big rivalry in the earlier days of football. It was a show that was really appropriate for the occasion. Appropriately, we did that show again--I think we modified it a little bit--but we did the show again at the centennial game at Rutgers in 1969, the next fall. That was an interesting thing. [Editor's Note: The East-West

Shrine Bowl is an annual postseason college football all-star game. On December 28, 1968, the East-West Shrine Game was played at Candlestick Park in San Francisco. The West won 18-7.]

The Rose Bowl Parade wasn't a field show performance, it was just a matter of marching. I think it was about seven miles total in length, including the beginning part of it (staging), then the Colorado Boulevard part of it, which is what everybody sees, and then at the end you have to march to Pasadena High School, which is a little bit more. We were sort of unprepared for that in a way, because we were a high-stepping, high-tempo band, and we attempted to high step at a high tempo for that period of time. I would think it was maybe about, I don't know, easily three hours, three-and-a-half hours, something like that. It was really a physical challenge to do that in the way we did it, and I think that if we would have ever done it again, we probably would've taken a different approach in terms of tempo. I think that certainly the Big Ten bands at the time and even the Big Ten bands of today, the ones that still high step would do it for the beginning, for the cameras, and then drop the tempo to survive the rest of the parade. Of course, they also then go and play the football game, so they have a longer day.

I think it was a tribute to everybody's effort because it was physically very demanding to try and do what we did. Yet, again, it's one of those things in life that is kind of something that you don't forget. In fact, we had a commemoration last year of the fiftieth anniversary of those performances with a number of us from the band back then. We held the ubiquitous Zoom meeting of today on the actual fiftieth anniversary of that weekend. It was interesting to reflect and reminisce about our experiences. Again, that was a very significant event for us to point to and something to do that for the band program at that time was rather exceptional. It was a good learning experience. It was a good experience.

There were a number of things that we did at that time that were pretty significant, including number of halftime shows for professional football teams, the Giants, the Jets, and the Baltimore Colts. We did those things in that year to help raise some money for the California trip. We tried to make it as painless for the members as possible in terms of finances. We were able to do that through getting some support from the University and some other sources and also payment for these halftime shows. That was pretty cool too, to have a year when you did all that and played at Giants Stadium and Shea Stadium and Memorial Stadium in Baltimore. In California, we rehearsed in Kezar Stadium, and we performed in Candlestick Park. Five major venues like that really in a matter of a couple of months was pretty cool. So, those things were significant for the marching band.

The other thing that was significant for the marching band came in 1970, which was a performance on *The Ed Sullivan Show*. *The Ed Sullivan Show* was looking for a band to perform on the show with Nancy Sinatra. She had a song that she was coming out with called "The Boys in the Band." They had come up a dream scenario for the broadcast, where Nancy Sinatra is singing along to a kind of a community band in a gazebo, kind of an oompah band, and then it sort of morphs into a big time marching band scenario with Nancy Sinatra. [Editor's Note: Nancy Sinatra is a singer and oldest daughter of singer Frank Sinatra. She released, "I Love Them All (The Boys in the Band)" in 1967.]

That was a really interesting experience to be on the show, to get really a sense of how they put these things together professionally. We went in for a recording session. Then, they did video on the stage at the Ed Sullivan Theater. Then, of course, on Sunday night, we were there and we came out on stage and played something for the audience, but what went out over the air was everything that had been pre-recorded and edited, so it's interesting. Actually, Nancy Sinatra's website has the video from that performance from 1970, so you can actually see it these days. It was interesting because none of us had actually seen it for years because the video wasn't released, but it is on her website now.

That was another cool experience for us, where something fell into our lap, because, again, we were becoming known as kind of the big-time college band in the New York Metropolitan area. That's also worked for the bands in recent years too. Some of the performances that they've had recently really speak to the fact that if you're looking for a big-time band in this area, you look to Rutgers. That's good. That's what we want to have happen. We want them to think of Rutgers when they think of things that you can recognize in the metropolitan area. That's a good thing for the University, then and now.

SI: Were there other traveling tours that come to mind, maybe nothing as big as the California trip, but other things you had to put together?

WT: We had some wild weekends, where we'd go and play an away football game. I think the one that was probably the most complicated was when we played a game at Cornell. We went up to Ithaca to play that game, and then the next day we had to play at halftime for the Giants. So, we left New Brunswick, we went to Cornell, played a football game at Cornell, I think we stayed overnight in Binghamton, New York, and then, early the next morning, we bussed down to Giants Stadium to do the Giants game. That was a big weekend.

The band went on most away football games, maybe not all, but most. We certainly were able to do that, at that time, because the schools that we played in most cases were close enough not to have to go overnight. Every once in a while, we'd have an overnight trip, but most of the time it was not. Because it wasn't overnight, we could play at more away games than you might typically do today with the travel out to the Midwest, although they usually do one big trip a year. We were able to do more of the games every season. We had some interesting experiences going to different colleges, and of course it was a whole different level of college. It wasn't like going to Michigan or Ohio State. It was going to Lehigh and Lafayette and schools like that, which were certainly great schools. It was just a different level, Princeton, Harvard, Yale, different schools, Holy Cross, Boston College, schools like that.

It was a good experience for us, and the band always acquitted itself pretty well. That's an understatement; I'd say we acquitted ourselves very well. The band that was in style to what we did at the time was Lehigh. They had a good tradition in their marching band. I remember, it was either my junior or my senior year that because Lehigh and Rutgers were becoming known for their bands, the whole athletic program booklet for that weekend focused on the band. There was a big article, and it was nice to get that recognition.

In terms of other things, the wind ensemble played a couple times in New York City at Town Hall and premiered some pieces. I think I mentioned to you that Mason Gross was a narrator for Aaron Copland's "Lincoln Portrait" at Town Hall, which was a wonderful show of support from the President of the University to do that with us.

Most of our concerts were held in the College Avenue Gym, what they called the Barn. Then, in 1968, when they opened the Student Center adjacent to the gym, we did the inaugural concert for the Student Center, and then after that point, we played concerts there in their multi-purpose room. We also played concerts at Voorhees Chapel on the Douglass Campus. Those places were where we did most of our concertizing.

In addition, we did a concert at the Garden State Arts Center. It was for a high school audience, which was interesting because it was during the day and the place was filled with high school bands and that was a good experience too. It was a good way to show the high schools of New Jersey the quality and the excellence of the wind ensemble. So, that was a good experience, and I hope that it increased our reputation in the state. Those were all good experiences that I had as part of the band. Then, I did have some experiences with the Rutgers bands later on, when I was a high school band director, so I could stay connected with the program.

SI: I am curious, on campus, was there a building or place that was the center for the band?

WT: Yes, it was McKinney Hall. McKinney Hall was on the corner of Easton Avenue and Hamilton Street, and it was really the place where we held our rehearsals. Well, actually, any time the marching band did an indoor musical rehearsal, it was there, and all of the concert and pep band rehearsals were there. That was really the home of the band and the Glee Club for many, many years. At one point, in more recent years, the band moved out, and they actually ended up with a place on the Livingston Campus that was a little bit bigger, more storage, more rehearsal space, and I believe that's still where the marching band rehearses today. From my years, it was McKinney Hall, and I logged a lot of hours in McKinney Hall in my college career. I was probably there more than any place else. So, that was really our home, if you will. [Editor's Note: In 1981, the marching band moved its practices from McKinney Hall primarily to the Douglass Campus, where the band practiced outside on Antilles Field. In the late 1980s, it was decided that the band would move to the Livingston Campus to Lucy Stone Hall, where the former Livingston College Music Department had been.]

SI: You mentioned earlier the hundredth anniversary game and how the actual program that you put on was similar to what you had done in California, but do you have other memories about that day and just being there, that sort of thing?

WT: Well, it was a big event for Rutgers because it was nationally televised, and for Rutgers football, at that time, that wasn't really the case. Of course, college football wasn't as broadly televised as it is today anyway. There were some trappings that came with being on television that were kind of different. We had a little bit of an introduction to that in California because that game was nationally televised as well. The stadium, at that point in time, was very different than it is today. They've made several additions to the stadium over the years, and what they did for the centennial game was to put in some temporary seating. The band, which normally sat up

in the stands around the fifty-yard line, sat in a set of bleachers which was kind of offset on the field, just to open up more seating in the stands. [Editor's Note: The hundredth anniversary football game between Rutgers and Princeton on September 27, 1969 aired regionally on ABC. The original Rutgers Stadium stood from 1938 to 1993. It was demolished and replaced by a new stadium at the same site, which opened in 1994. The new stadium was originally called Rutgers Stadium. Rutgers has sold the stadium's naming rights since 2010. In 2019, it became known as SHI Stadium.]

It was an exciting day because Rutgers won that game rather handily. I believe the score was 29 to nothing in favor of Rutgers. It was an exciting day and a good celebration. I think it was unfortunate they couldn't enjoy the 150th anniversary in the same way, which, I guess, was because of a quirk in scheduling, but they did have the Big Ten commemoration at the State Theatre for the 150th anniversary. That was something, but it would have been nice if Rutgers could have at least played a football game the weekend that it was being observed. I remember being on the field and doing the halftime show at the centennial game because it was a higher level of excitement than usual. The place was packed. I believe that they did a replica game back then too, but we weren't involved in that. We were just involved in our regular gameday schedule. There were a lot of things that went on in connection with the game that were really memorable. It was a good thing, and I was happy to be involved in it. I was lucky in that regard, to be there for the bicentennial convocation and to be there for the hundredth anniversary of college football.

SI: Well, let's talk about some other things happening on campus. If you have other memories about the band, just go right ahead and we will probably loop back to that. Obviously, the civil rights movement was a backdrop to these years, and Rutgers actually shut down for a few days after Dr. Martin Luther King was killed.

WT: I don't believe that Rutgers shut down for that. That was 1968. The interesting thing was that one of the things that the band did as part of the general student activities on campus was a major concert program. These concerts at Rutgers were not the classical ones but the popular ones, and they were run by different student activities groups and the band ran one every year. That was another thing we ended up doing. As officers of the band, we were involved in putting that together. We had planned one of these concerts in April 1968. Actually, there were a couple of events that surrounded that unfortunate event. We were to play in Washington, D.C. at Lisner Auditorium. It was that same spring, and there was a concern about traveling to Washington at that point in time. It turned out that that concert was cancelled just because of those concerns, so we never did play there. We played a concert on campus instead, but it wasn't like playing in the nation's capital.

We had a concert planned in April of 1968, a major concert at the Barn, at the gym, and if I'm not mistaken, Judy Collins was the headliner for that concert. There were some question marks about what we should do about that concert. We ended up putting it on, and it ended up selling out. Most of the Rutgers concerts did, but it took some effort to do it. Certainly, those were decisions that were really hard to make at that time because of the gravity of the national situation, much like today. We really need to be cognizant of what's going on in the world, and so those were two events, one which ran and one which didn't because of that.

Rutgers did not shut down easily, but it did shut down when I was a freshman, the first time in its history that it ever shut down because of a snowstorm. I remember, I was at the Heights Campus and getting back down to College Avenue in this snowstorm on the bus was an adventure, and it was really obvious the buses could hardly navigate and get through it, the snow was so heavy. They ended up cancelling classes. They cancelled classes for the Revolutionary War. They cancelled classes at Rutgers for the Civil War, things like that. For classes to be cancelled for a snowstorm, that was kind of unprecedented.

The next time classes were cancelled was Kent State, and that was in May of 1970. I think I told you a little bit about that last time, and that was certainly an experience because it was just incredible that things could get so out of hand. But, then again, open your eyes this weekend, for different reasons, but things do get out of hand when you have extreme opinions being voiced. It's really not the way it should be. [Editor's Note: Following President Richard Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia, a nationwide student strike commenced in the beginning of May 1970. On May 4 in Ohio, National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters and bystanders at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine. The Rutgers College faculty voted on Tuesday, May 5 to make classes and final exams optional and instituted pass/fail grades for the spring semester 1970.]

That was one of the things that I was always proud of Rutgers for, because they were really pretty good about protecting academic freedom and to be intellectual enough to be able to put your views forward and have the right to express them. It doesn't always happen, as we see every day. Yes, I do have memories of those things. Again, you're bringing back some things that I haven't really thought about much in recent years, so that's interesting.

SI: Do you recall, on campus, any actions, either marches or building takeovers, that you watched or took part in?

WT: Well, I think that happened after I graduated, but there were a few. At one point, I know there was a student takeover at Old Queens. Then, the ROTC (Reserved Officers Training Corps) building was set on fire, but I think those all happened after I graduated. Of course, when the campus was closed because of Kent State, students gathered on the lawn in front of Old Queens facing the Quad and I guess it was sort of a rally. I went to it and I do remember it, but, again, it was an unprecedented kind of thing to have the National Guard shoot at students at a university in our country. Again, that was a big moment in history. You tend to remember those moments. [Editor's Note: In 1969, members of the Students for a Democratic Society firebombed the Army ROTC building on College Avenue. The fire did not cause major damage. Following President Nixon's expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia, a nationwide student strike commenced in the beginning of May 1970. The strike began at Rutgers on Friday, May 1. On Monday, May 4, two thousand protesters gathered on the Old Queens Campus, and Rutgers President Mason Gross addressed the crowd, calling the protesters his guests. That day, two hundred students occupied the second and third floors of Old Queens, including Gross' office, resulting in a two-day sit-in of Old Queens. After the shooting at Kent State, in solidarity with the National Strike, the Rutgers College faculty voted on Tuesday, May 5 to effectively shut down the campus, making classes and final exams optional and instituting pass/fail grades for the

spring semester 1970. On May 5, massive demonstrations continued at Rutgers, and protests and counter-protests continued for several weeks at Rutgers and on campuses across the nation.]

SI: Turning to your academics again, you started student teaching in your senior year.

WT: Yes, in the spring of 1970. I went to South River because the band director at South River was a Rutgers grad. It was close by and it was a place I knew I could get some experience because Dr. Whitener had worked with the band director there and was pretty certain I would get a lot of experience conducting the band. Sometimes, as a student teacher, you go in and you don't really get all that much experience on your own until the end. Well, I walked in, and the second day that I was in South River, I ran the whole program. I did; it was like trial by fire. That set up the next seventeen years of my career because they hired me as band director after I student taught. I stayed there for seventeen years. I had some great experiences there.

It was a bit challenging to walk in and actually try to put into practice everything that you thought you had learned. Doing it on your own is different than doing it with someone else's guidance and help. I will say that my preparation at Rutgers, thanks to Dr. Whitener, helped me be successful for all those years. I was also very fortunate because I maintained a strong connection with Rutgers while I was at South River, but a little less strong when I went to Pequannock because of the distance. I'm about an hour and fifteen minutes away from Rutgers now, but while I was in South River, I was close by and many of my students from South River went to Rutgers and were a part of the band program. In that era, there were probably more kids from South River that went through the Rutgers band than any other high school in New Jersey just because of that connection. Sometimes I forget even today which ones of my students went through Rutgers and then I realize, "Wait a minute, you went to Rutgers too, didn't you?" I thought that was a nice way to give back to Rutgers and provide my students with the same kind of experience that I had in college. Several of them have become music educators and have their own bands and things like that. So, they all make me very proud. Again, walking into that first day of student teaching really kind of defined the next seventeen years of my career.

SI: Why was it such a trial by fire? Why did you end up running the program?

WT: Because, in some ways, the person who was my cooperating teacher was perfectly satisfied with letting me take over. I don't want to say anything disparaging, but I think in normal circumstances, that's not what you do with a student teacher. I had several student teachers throughout my career and that's not how I handled it, but he was perfectly happy to sit back and let me run the program. It turned out to be a benefit to me, because you don't know the job until you do it. One of my students went to The College of New Jersey as a trombone major and a music-ed major and I hired him to be my middle school director. During the interview, he said, "You know, during those weeks that I spent student teaching, I learned so much more as a student teacher than I learned in all my coursework." I said, "Pete, just wait until your first day of teaching your own band because of the number of decisions that you have to make. You don't really realize what those consequences will be and how many you have to make until you're actually totally responsible for doing it."

It was a little bit challenging to have to put together a concert. The first concert that I gave at South River was three weeks after I walked through the door and I conducted the entire concert. It was like, "Man." [laughter] It was tough because trying to get the band ready in such a short period of time, it was a challenge. Dr. Whitener really helped me with that because some of the literature that had been picked by my cooperating teacher for that concert was really not a very good choice for that band. Dr. Whitener helped out and we put together a program that was doable, and the band ended up sounding good, so no complaints there. That's where you earn your stripes in situations like that. It was probably easier to earn my stripes like that than to walk through the door in August or September and have to put a marching band together, and at least I knew the kids and I knew what to expect and I'd had the experience of having some small degree of success doing it. Again, it worked out as an advantage for me, and it really helped me be successful in my career there.

SI: I am curious, and this spans both your education at Rutgers and maybe your early years as a band director in South River, what stands out about what was emphasized in the curriculum or maybe just the way things were done that stands in contrast to what you knew later on or what has been done more recently?

WT: Well, I think what I learned at Rutgers from Scott was that when you do something, you have to strive for excellence at it. You have to have a standard and you have to make sure that everybody is working toward that standard. With that said, you have to also take the view that as a teacher, not just as a band director, but as a teacher, that every student can learn, and that's something that I've believed ever since. But it was particularly clear in the band's situation because every member in that band needed to make a positive contribution if the band was going to be successful. Now, granted, they all have different abilities and different capacities for doing that, but the effort of every student was needed to make a positive contribution to the best of their ability if the program was to be successful.

I think I was able to communicate that as it was communicated to me. Why do we do this? Well, we do it for the sake of the music. I was able to get that at Rutgers from Scott and I was able to transmit that to my students all along. They really understood that and they understood why they were there, and having contact with them for all these years after, I do think they really understood that. Many them that are still involved in music, even if only as a good audience member and hearing from them that they really felt they had a good preparation, that's very validating for me.

Of course, that doesn't just apply to music. That applies to anything you're teaching, even discipline. As an administrator, working with students and working on behavior, you must remember that it's the behavior that's the problem. It's not the student. The other thing is treating students with respect. It's so important, and that really links into the work I've been doing the last eight years with school culture and climate and social-emotional learning and character education. I really got that, and it really does link all the way back to my days at Rutgers with those kinds of the philosophical underpinnings. It wasn't necessarily in the same terms that I would use today, but I think that's where the seeds were planted in my days in the band.

SI: You mentioned, in addition to the job at South River, you also met your wife and that kept you in New Jersey.

WT: Yes, I did meet my wife during my senior year. She was a junior at the time at Douglass. We ended up getting married after she graduated. She was from Edison, New Jersey. I wouldn't say that that's the only thing kept me in New Jersey. I had some job opportunities. I had originally thought I would go right into graduate school, but I wasn't able to get any kind of scholarship support or funding at that time. There wasn't a whole lot of money floating around for master's degree candidates in music. So, I ended up deciding to go to work first before I did my graduate work.

I was student teaching at South River, and before I left, the superintendent there had offered me the job and I said, "Well, I'm really hoping to go to graduate school, but I appreciate your offer." Ironically, when I realized that graduate school wasn't going to be practical for me right then, I called South River and I said, "Is the job still open, and would you still be interested in talking to me about coming on board?" The response I got from the superintendent was, "Well, if you want to drive down here, you can sign the contract today." I never really interviewed for the job. It was offered to me based on the work that I did as a student-teacher there, and even though I originally decided not to take it, when my situation changed, I called them and I just walked in the door and that was that, again, being in the right place at the right time.

Then, I had some thoughts at one point or another about going back to the Maryland area, where I was originally from, but it really wasn't an option. I found that I would not be able to get credit in Maryland for the job experience I had gotten in New Jersey, so it was not a viable option. I'd also looked at going away to graduate school, but, again, the money was the problem and I had one child at the time and then two more later. You have to look at things responsibly and reasonably, so I decided to get my master's in New Jersey part time, and I went to Trenton State College, as it was called then, now it's called The College of New Jersey, and that was a good experience, too. Just the way things ended up lining up in my life, I ended up staying and I don't regret for one minute staying in New Jersey. I had good opportunities here. I worked in two good school districts. I'm able to do some productive things in retirement, and I'm thankful. As much as I would've loved at some point to move back to Baltimore, I'm happy where I am, and my family's here and my grandchildren are here, so no reason to move at this point.

SI: Before we leave Rutgers and get more into your career, do any other memories stand out from your four years there?

WT: Well, I think that I appreciated the fact that Rutgers College had a rigorous approach to education, and as I think I told you before, the speech that all freshmen got, "Look to your right, look to your left, only one of the three of you will graduate," I think that it certainly put the responsibility on the student. I think that intellectually in that period of time, and I can't speak how it is afterwards or even today, but the intellectual expectation at Rutgers College at the time was very high. I came from a rather prestigious high school, and I found Rutgers to be very rigorous. I really did, and it was challenging to get the work done. There was a high expectation for excellence at Rutgers. I'm thankful for that, because, frankly, after my undergraduate experience at Rutgers, my graduate experience at The College of New Jersey, or Trenton State

was good, it required work, but it wasn't as rigorous as the undergraduate program at Rutgers College. I could say the same in a way for my doctoral program at Rutgers. Of course, I'd learned a lot in all those years and I had a little different approach to getting work done and being on time, because my work ethic, I think, came into play more. My undergraduate years was more about my work ethic toward the band more than toward scholarship at times, but the courses that I took, there was a high expectation. I value my Rutgers education highly. That would be something that I would think of.

I think it was also important that despite the fact that Rutgers College was pretty selective in terms of who was going there, there was an ability there to meet all kinds of people from all different places and all different places in life and to be able to interact in a rather, I'm going to use the word but I don't know if it's really accurate, cosmopolitan environment, aside from the fact that most of the people were from New Jersey. You got to meet a wide range of people at Rutgers, and it really helps you to appreciate differences--not just tolerate, but appreciate differences. I think that's something I also got out of Rutgers, certainly more so than my upbringing before that. Those are things that I found valuable my whole life. I have only really good memories of Rutgers. At the time, it was challenging. There was ups and downs, but in the end I'm thankful for what I learned there because it's benefitted my whole life. It's really helped me bring those qualities to my students.

SI: Tell me a little bit about your early years at South River, what kind of school environment you were entering, what kind of community it was, what were the challenges, that sort of thing.

WT: Well, South River was a very interesting place. It was kind of European in a sense because there was a large Polish and Russian population in South River at the time. Doing music there was a tremendous advantage because there was an appreciation for good music. South River High School was a big football school, to the degree that the entire climate of the school seemed to be dependent on how the football team did. It was really absolutely evident from the beginning that that was the case. Now, South River had quite a few successful football players, not the least of which at the time when I went there were Drew Pearson and Joe Theismann. They were both graduates of South River. Joe graduated first and then Drew. They weren't actually in school when I was there. They had younger siblings that were in school when I was there, but Joe had already gone to Notre Dame and Drew went to Tulsa. Of course, they made their fame with the Washington Redskins and the Dallas Cowboys. [Editor's Note: Drew Pearson is a retired NFL wide receiver who played for the Dallas Cowboys from 1973 to 1983. He played college football at Tulsa from 1969 to 1973. Joe Theismann is a retired NFL quarterback who played for the Washington Redskins from 1974 to 1985. He played college football at Notre Dame from 1968 to 1971.]

It was really clear that football was a tremendous focus in terms of what was going to be successful. When I was able build the band to a point where it was successful, it really jived with what was going on in terms of football at South River because that was our stage, the football field, for marching band. Of course, I put an awful lot of effort into the concert side of it too, not that you can't learn a lot about music in marching band--you learn about a lot more than music in marching band by the way--but in terms of learning technical skill and the music literature, that happens in the concert band, symphonic band area.

Again, at South River, I worked really hard to try to uphold the same kinds of standards that we had at Rutgers but on an appropriate level. They were high school kids, not college kids. We were able to do that pretty quickly. I remember I had a student who was a terrific student. I think she got eight hundreds on both of her College Boards and ended up going to Princeton and she was a very good clarinet player. But when I was student-teaching, she made a comment to me and she was one of your smarter kids, she said, "You know, this band really sucks." I said, "What do you mean the band sucks?" She said, "We really suck." I said, "Well, you don't have to suck. Let's put some effort into it so it doesn't." She was a sophomore when I first got there, and by the time she graduated, she was the president of the band, and by that time the band didn't suck.

We did a lot of good things. It was a prevailing attitude, and when I walked into there as a student-teacher, I had to address that rather immediately because that attitude wasn't going to get us anywhere. For whatever the reason, I was able to do that. I was able to communicate to the kids that, "Okay, doing this music thing and doing it for what we would call the art of music was something that was really worthwhile doing." I think that probably my former students from South River would still believe that today and tell you that if you were to speak to them. That, to me, was the most rewarding thing about my career at South River, being able to have that kind of impact and being able to watch all these kids grow up well.

I lost a music supervisor's job that was interviewing for. I was in the interview and they said, "What is your greatest accomplishment?" I was honest. I said, "To be able to say that my students have grown up to be productive and functional and successful adults." That was not what they were looking for, and I knew when I gave that answer that was it for me in that job search. You know what, if that wasn't important to them, why would I want to work there? That, to me, is the most important thing, not winning some trophy someplace. I was never into that. I can see why bands do it, but that wasn't my level of interest and I was much more into doing what we could in our own auditorium, wherever we performed, and just trying to strive to be the best we could be with what we had, to be respectful, to be responsible, and to care for each other. At that time in my life, I wouldn't have put it in terms that I just used, but with a little bit more wisdom and knowing what I know now about what makes schools effective, those are the things that make schools effective, whatever the subject. I realized, after the fact, that that's what I was doing all along.

I had a very good run at South River, a lot of great students. I was able to actually enjoy some peak moments in their lives with them, after graduation. Nothing made me feel better than to see them be successful or reach a personal goal or something like that. That's one of the reasons why I've stayed connected with them all these years. I've been gone from South River over thirty years. 1987 is when I left, so it's thirty-three years. I'm still in touch with someone from South River almost every day. That's why I stayed in only two school districts in my career. The important thing to me was building relationships and connections. Highlights of my career, I could actually look back at some concert performances or marching band performances or something like that, but I do think the highlights really come when I look at my former students and what they've become. Again, as I say, a lot of them went through Rutgers.

SI: You left South River in 1987. What led to that career move?

WT: Well, there were a couple of things. My mentor at South River was one of my superintendents there. His name was Regis Wiegand, and he came from the Pittsburgh area. He was superintendent there for nine years, so he was at South River for more than half of my career there. He was a very forthright, challenging man, and it was very interesting the relationship that we were able to build with each other. I remember the very first time I ever went into his office to talk to him, and it was on my own initiative. I made an appointment to see him. I went into his office, and basically our first interchange was him asking, "Why are you here?" I said, "Well, I thought you'd be interested in knowing something about the music program in South River. I thought I'd like to meet you and talk to you about the program." It was funny. He sort of challenged me at the beginning, "Why should I be interested in what you're doing?" Over the years, of all the people in South River staff wise, I was probably closer to him than anybody else. There was maybe one other person who I was very close to, he was the athletic director, and we had offices across the hall from each other and, ironically, he ended up becoming a superintendent as well.

I ended up building a rather close relationship with Dr. Weigand. He was a very interesting man. He was partially responsible for my success in my doctoral program because he took an interest in my doing that, and this was after I'd known him for five years or so. I remember talking to him about career aspirations and things like that. He said, "Well, what do you want to do?" I said, "Well, perhaps I'd like to be a college professor," until I realized the career paths are different between public school and college and once you get on one track, it's kind of hard to shift gears. Obviously, the other thing was I thought I wanted to get into administration. At the time, I thought I wanted to be a music supervisor. I thought, "Well, one of the things I could do is go back to school." After giving it some thought, I went back to Rutgers at the Graduate School of Education.

To give you a kind of circuitous answer to your question, I left in 1987 because that's when I finished my doctorate. Coincidentally, it's also when my mentor retired from South River. In one way, it seemed like the end of an era for me there, and in the other way, it seemed like it was the start of something new. I had been looking at moving into music supervisor positions before that, but I just happened to hit on Pequannock. My skill set was really kind of perfect for what they were envisioning for the position in Pequannock because I also served as director of adult education in my last year at South River. I had taken a course in adult music education in my master's degree program. The person who held that position previously left the job, it opened up, and I talked to Regis Wiegand and I said, "What do you think? Is this something that you think I ought to be doing or could be doing?" He said, "Well, why do you want to do it?" I said, "Well, one of the reasons is because I took this course in adult education as part of my master's degree and it's kind of interesting to me." So, we talked about it and I got the position. In my last year at South River, I was Director of Adult Education, in addition to being band director and the director of music for the district. By the way, that was also my full-time semester at Rutgers. I was kind of a glutton for punishment at the time.

The job that opened up in Pequannock was for Supervisor of Art and Music and Director of Adult Education. There probably weren't too many people who could apply for that job that

would have the credentials that I had with experience in both areas. Long story short, I got the job, and I decided to take it and come up north. For the first year I was here, I made the commute from East Brunswick to Pequannock, which was driving the Parkway every day, because Interstate 287 at the time hadn't been finished up north. I guess it stopped in Montville. 287 wasn't the ideal choice, so I went the Parkway every day to Route 23. That was a bit of a challenge. Again, sometimes things work out, and I couldn't be more thankful for the seventeen years I had in South River because they were very formative for me and they taught me about the impact that one can have on oneself and one can have on students.

But then, I had some opportunities at Pequannock that I never would have had at South River. I think if I had stayed in South River, I was so defined as the band director that I never would've been able to move into any other role in the district. It was really the right time for me to move. I really missed being in South River, but it was also a challenge to do new things and learn new things. It worked out for the better, and twenty-five years later, I retired as Superintendent of Schools. That's not really the motivation I had for going there, but you just make decisions based on what's happening at the time. I'm happy about that decision too. The two districts I was in, I was very connected to both of them. I put in a whole lot of effort into both but got a lot back from both too--a lot of personal satisfaction and a lot of connections and relationships that have lasted a lifetime. Those are great things, so no complaints.

Of course, it was very different to be a supervisor of music and to be the director of adult ed and having to acquire a whole new skill set when you walk through another door. Again, it was trial by fire in a way because I came to Pequannock in August of 1987, and I had to put together a comprehensive adult school program that would start in September of 1987 that consisted of 135 courses. Putting the brochure together for that fall and getting it all set up was a real challenge. Some of the work had been done by my predecessor. That was trial by fire too. Of course, I had some skills that I had already acquired that would be useful, but there was a whole new set of skills that I had to learn. I did and it all worked out. Twenty-five years later, it was a good thing.

SI: Well, before we talk more about Pequannock, tell me more about your graduate work, particularly the years at Rutgers. Do any of the professors stand out as being important or influential or that sort of thing?

WT: It's interesting because it was a difficult decision as to graduate work. I think I told you last week that when I went back for my master's degree, I went to The College of New Jersey because they offered a Masters of Education specific to music, and Rutgers didn't. That was kind of a concern because I was trying to figure out, "Okay, where does all of this fit together?" If I go back to Rutgers for my doctorate, what do I major in? Do I try to get a Doctor of Musical Arts (DMA) degree, which is a more like a performance, conducting, trumpet-playing degree, or do I focus on education? I talked to Scott Whitener again, who still was a force in my life. Scott had gotten his doctorate at Rutgers, and he got an Ed.D. at the Graduate School of Ed, so I'm thinking, "All right, if the Graduate School of Ed is good enough for Scott, it's good enough for me," and I ended up investigating and going to the Graduate School of Education.

After looking at some of the offerings and thinking about it, I actually majored in Creative Arts Education. I did it because one of the things it allowed me to do was put together my own

program of studies. I wanted to do something that was still related to music, and I couldn't do that in the other departments, but in Creative Arts ed, I could. That's why I decided to go with that. I didn't realize, at the time, how that would all play out, but I figured it made sense if I wanted to do music and I wanted to do a doctorate that was connected in some way to music. That was my choice. It ended up working out really well because I ended up being able to focus on something that was really interesting to me for my dissertation work, and of course the most important thing in the doctorate is what your research was going to be about and whether it's going to have meaning to you personally and whether it's going to have meaning to the field in general.

It worked out that my main professor at the Graduate School of Ed, and there were several that really stand out in my mind, but the one who I did the most work with was Helane Rosenberg, who was the chair of that department. Actually, I ended up doing some things with her, in her research, that led me to do my research in the importance of using mental imagery in artistic performance. In taking some of the early courses, it became obvious to me that mental imagery does play a role in playing an instrument as it does in a lot of different areas. I don't want to get into all the specifics with you, but there are an awful lot of places where mental imagery could be a real advantage. I also felt that musicians used it intuitively in a lot of ways and they might not even label it as mental imagery, even though they would use some of those features. For example, as a musician, you hear something in your mind, and it affects the way you're going to perform it. That's really aural imagery. People think of mental imagery and they think primarily of visual imagery. Certainly, there is visual imagery, but there's also imagery that's associated with each of the different sense modalities. [Editor's Note: Dr. Helane Rosenberg is an Associate Professor at the Graduate School of Education.]

It connected with me because one summer I did a research project with Dr. Rosenberg that involved interviewing artists that were being supported by Guggenheim Museum grants and talking to them about how visual images and other forms of imagery affected their art making. I interviewed several New York artists on that score and ended up contributing to a journal article that was eventually published.

Of course, the next step would be to go from visual arts to musical performance. That was where I went, looking at, "Okay, how do musicians use imagery in their playing?" I really did narrow it down because of my interest and my experience in brass players, orchestral brass players, in the United States. I picked five orchestras. The five were the Boston Symphony, the Baltimore Symphony, the New York Philharmonic, the Philadelphia Orchestra, and the Chicago Symphony. I picked those five because I had connections with players in all five orchestras. I had to figure out how to get these busy, well-known brass players to be willing to sit down for an interview with me and talk about something that either they may have thought about or had not thought about.

I think one of the biggest challenges would be to be able to have the right people participate in the interviews, and I was very fortunate in that regard because I ended up being very successful in getting them to be involved in my study. That was really the crux of the work that I did, and of course, it was interesting because there was a psychological piece to this whole study, in addition to the musical piece to it. When I wrote my dissertation, I understood that I had to

explain the psychological aspect to musicians who would read it and the musical aspect to the psychologists. In reading through, you can almost see, okay, this sentence is for the musicians to understand the psychology, and the next sentence explains the very same thing from the point of view of the psychologist to understand the music. [laughter] It was a bit of a challenge to try to blend that and make it sensible for everybody so that a musician could pick it up and read it and understand the psychology and that a psychologist could pick it up and understand the music. That way it would make sense to a greater number of people.

That was a bit of a challenge, but it was a great experience. I was very fortunate. I talked to some pretty famous brass players, some of the most famous players in the world, and it was a great personal experience just to sit there and have an hour conversation, a two-hour conversation with them. I put together a semi-standard interview format with probe questions and so forth, much like you're doing with me. Then, to be able to go in and be able to talk to them about it and direct their thinking in some cases because they might not have thought about whether or not this is important to them. I'd ask them some interesting questions like, "Imagine biting into a lemon. Are you salivating at this point?" Most people do, if they really imagine biting into a lemon. As I'm telling you that, I can feel my saliva glands working right now. "Can you form a mental picture of your mother's hand?" Most everybody can do that. "Can you hear the sound of your wife's voice?" There's different things like that. There are certain probe questions, if people don't understand anything about imagery, that help them understand that an image is a representation of an actual sensory experience that the brain basically puts away for use later on. That's where it all starts, and then there are more specific questions about their musical interpretation or what their concept of proper tone is for the instrument. Do they use mental rehearsal to help prepare for a concert? How do they deal with performance anxiety if they have it? How do they feel about a conductor that uses imagery to help describe how they want the piece to be performed? Those are the kinds of questions. There are actually a few more that I didn't just mention.

It was an interesting experience talking to these people, because a lot of them hadn't really thought about imagery before and so they were sort of discovering they were already using it as the interview went on. Everyone was very gracious, and they were all articulate about the process that they use to play, which was really helpful and very interesting. That was a great experience for me.

Of course, one of the readers of my dissertation was Dr. Scott Whitener. Once again, that influence came to bear. Helane Rosenberg was the chair of my committee, there was another person from her department, and Jeff Smith was also on my committee. Jeff Smith, at the time, was a psychometrician. He was a star in the department and left Rutgers not long after. He ended up becoming Director of Research for the Graduate School of Ed until he left for promotion someplace else. He went to the University of Chicago, and his dissertation chairman was Benjamin Bloom. You may have heard of him. Jeff was very supportive. It was an interesting dynamic because Jeff's voice was very important to Helane, because he was a star. She wanted me to ask Jeff to be on my committee, and it was a good thing that I did because he was very helpful. [Editor's Note: Dr. Jeff Smith is a Professor and Dean of the College of Education at the University of Otago in New Zealand. He worked at Rutgers for twenty-nine years and served as Chair of the Educational Psychology Department and Associate Dean of the

Graduate School of Education. Dr. Benjamin Bloom was an educational psychologist who lived from 1913 to 1999.]

I would say that my influences at the Graduate School of Education certainly included Helane Rosenberg and Jeff Smith, you already know about Scott Whitener, and a couple of other people who I worked with. Larry Kaplan was one of my professors early on, and Larry Kaplan taught about the politics of education. I only took the one course with him, because he taught at a different department. I took his politics of ed course because I had heard good things about it, and it was a terrific course. I learned a lot about how to look at the political forces that are involved in a town, and that really kind of opened my eyes for later, when I became a superintendent. Those were basically the professors at the Graduate School of Ed that stood out for me.

Again, I thought it was a good experience because I got to have a say in what I wanted to study. Helane's main level of interest was mental imagery, and that worked fine with me because it made so much sense in terms of brass playing and musicians and performance. I guess it was an advantage to her for me to continue that study into music, but it was certainly an advantage to me to be able to look at music from her point of view regarding mental imagery. It was a very good experience for me. Again, I learned a lot doing it and I had a lot of good experiences talking to people, some of whom were my idols in terms of brass playing and that was a great thing.

When I finished my doctorate, I said, "Okay, did I just get a doctorate of education to continue to be a band director at South River for the rest of my career?" The answer was probably not. It was time to try something new, and that's what I did. I finished my degree at the end of '87 and moved almost immediately to Pequannock.

SI: I am curious to find out a little bit more about your adaptation to adult education. What were the challenges there? How large of a program was it? You mentioned, I think, 135 classes.

WT: Something like that, when I first started. There was a thirty-two-page brochure that I had to create on PageMaker, which I had never used before. So, that was a busy month putting that together. I did have a model to go from, but I had to learn how to do it for myself. The adult ed program in South River was very different than the adult program at Pequannock. First of all, the South River program was completely subsidized because there was a lot of funding available for Adult Basic Skills, English for the Foreign Born, and that was really mainly it. There were different levels for each one of these programs. South River was demographically changing at the time. We had a big influx of Brazilians, who would come to the United States during the summer in Brazil and they would earn money in the United States, and then go back to Brazil. A lot of those folks would come to the adult school to learn English. English as a Second Language (ESL) and English for the Foreign Born are really two different things conceptually. We had classes in each, plus Adult Basic Skills just for people trying to gain literacy. It was an interesting experience. I still remember some of my students there, even though I was director for only one year. I didn't teach it; I ran it. I hired the teachers and supervised the program. That was a couple of nights a week.

When I went to Pequannock, it was totally different--a whole different concept of what adult education was about. Those elements were still there, the basic skills elements, the English for the foreign born, the ESL, that was still there. It was still part of the program, but the program in Pequannock was really much more based on adult interests. One of the things that we did a lot with, in the Pequannock Adult School, was computer training. Now, remember, this was 1987-1988. These were the early days of personal computing and personal computer access. We had a lot of IBM classes that we did for the IBM PC. We also had a Macintosh lab. We put a ton of people through those computer courses. It was kind of an introductory course to computers, like computer literacy, but then the courses went into software, Word Perfect, dBase. I'm thinking of all the different pieces of software that we taught. We taught PageMaker on the Mac. We taught Microsoft Word, Excel, the whole Mac side of it, which at the beginning was very separate from the PC side of it because the Macintosh side was a graphical interface, and the PCs were still running DOS. Then, of course, a couple years later, Windows for the PC came out and then Microsoft Word and some of those other programs, which were originally Macintosh programs, were migrated over to Windows. It was an interesting time. One year, I think I had fourteen hundred computer students go through the Pequannock Adult School, so it was a pretty big operation.

Then, you'd have other things, square dancing, ballroom dancing, I'm just pulling these off the top of my head, yoga, Jazzercise, and other kinds of crafty things. There were a number of investment courses that we offered. So, it was a pretty broad-based set of classes appealing to all sorts of different interest levels. Some people would come in and they would take one course and that would be it. Then, you'd have somebody who would come and take a couple of courses a semester. Some were like regulars and some just came in for that one little thing that interested them. It was an interesting experience doing the adult school there.

It was much more complex than what we had in South River because of the number of course offerings. It all had to be scheduled, and you had to hire teachers for everything. It was a pretty big deal to get it all organized. I used whatever leadership and administrative skills I gathered to make that happen, but in addition, I also supervised art and music. Of course, that was more in my wheelhouse, the music more than the art certainly. I supervised art and music for five years as Director of Fine and Performing Arts, and I did the adult school a little longer than that. I did the adult school for about nine years at Pequannock because I ended up moving over into building administration and I became assistant principal of the middle school as well as director of adult ed. It was a dual position. Then, I became principal of the middle school, but for the first year, I was also director of adult ed because they hired somebody to do the job and she flopped, and so they asked me to pick it up again. So, I did that. Following that, I was principal for fourteen years and then superintendent until the end of my career, the last three-and-a-half years. That's pretty much my Pequannock story in a nutshell.

SI: As you were going through these jobs, it tends to remove you from that direct instruction with the students. When you were initially there in the director of fine arts role, were you still able to teach, or was it mostly managing the teachers?

WT: Well, the funny thing was, and I hate to say this because I didn't think this was going to be the case, but in reflection, of all the jobs that I held in schools in my career that was probably the

least rewarding. The point that you're making is the reason why. Of course, as director of adult ed, it was a whole different piece. That wasn't mainstream public education. That was something extra. In terms of being the Director of Fine and Performing Arts, I did do some teaching, but it was totally off the books. It was extra and totally voluntarily on my part. I had a brass quintet that I coached, and the kids would come in before school and I'd work with them, and we'd put on some concerts and things. I would conduct the high school concert band every once in a while. I soloed with the band once or twice, so that was a good thing. I did get to know the kids but not anywhere near the way I got to know the kids I was teaching every day.

My job after that was a middle school assistant principal, and some people would say that that's the worst administrative job you could have, doing discipline for middle school kids, but I didn't look at it that way. I looked at it as an opportunity to teach kids again, but to teach them about behavior. As challenging as some of the kids were, those were the kids that I had a bond with by the time they got out of school, because we spent a lot of time together. Some of them learned quicker than others and some had a really rough time of it. Some did really well and some of them didn't. Some of them never really could get their act together. Actually, I was able to do enough positive things in that role that, actually, I liked that better than being supervisor of music, which really surprised me because I wouldn't have thought that going in. But you hit the nail on the head, the connection with the kids made the difference. It wasn't direct instruction in the classroom, but it was still instruction when I met with them. As assistant principal, I was primarily teaching them behavior and I really had a way to approach that which I think made that a little easier for them and for me.

This was back in, I guess, about '91-'92, something like that, but there was a book that came out through ASCD called *Discipline with Dignity*. Again, it made the point about behavior and discipline incidents, where it's the behavior that you want to address, not the kid. The problem is so often when kids misbehave, they're the ones that get the negative treatment. It's the behavior that needs to get the negative treatment and you have to teach the kids alternate ways to react to situations. One of the things about middle school is that those years in middle school are some of the most formative years of development, and kids are trying to figure out who they are and they may not know from day to day or perhaps in some cases from hour to hour who the hell they are. [Editor's Note: *Discipline with Dignity* by Richard Curwin was first published in 1988. ASCD is the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.]

The way you approach doing discipline--I choke at the word, behavior perhaps is a better word--with them is really significant in terms of what they learn, how quickly they learn it, and what they do with it. Again, that all connects with the whole social-emotional learning and the character education work that I've really become devoted to. When I was a principal, I was able to expand my reach. I tried to do some positive things as an assistant principal too. You don't want it all to be negative, all just dealing with the kids who misbehave, but, truthfully, that is primarily what you do in a role like that.

I really liked being a band director. I really did. I really got a charge out of what we could do together, but probably my favorite role in my career was being a principal because you had a school that really belonged to you. You had to go through certain actions for it to really feel like it belonged to you. There were certain things about the way you did things that if you created

them, then it became yours, like building a master schedule, for example, or making other major changes, and you could really put your identity on the school in terms of what you believed in or what you thought was important. I was able to do that at Pequannock Valley Middle School in a number of different ways, both for the kids and for the faculty. If I had to pick one job, that's the one I would pick, and I would've been very happy, I think, to have retired out of that position. At one point, I made it very clear that that was my intention. It's interesting because I applied for a couple other jobs in my time, assistant superintendencies, superintendencies, and I decided, very definitely, "Okay, I've had it with this. I like what I'm doing. I love my school. I'm going to retire as principal of this school."

It's funny, because not long after I made that decision, that's when I got the offer. I was actually approached to become superintendent in Pequannock. It was interesting that sometimes you have to decide you're not going to do something for the opportunity to come to you, but it came to me for a very specific reason, because the town was very divided. I'd been there a long time, and I had built a lot of capital across the whole town. There were board members there who felt that I could reunite the town. That's why they asked me to consider becoming superintendent. So, I did consider it, I became superintendent, and I think that I was successful in doing it. By the time I retired, the town was reunited. It didn't take too many years after that for that not to be the case anymore, but that was my mission and I fulfilled it. I felt good about that. As much as I said I would've probably been happier retiring as a principal, I'm glad I had the experience of leading the district, and I think I did some good things while I was the leader there. Sustainability is often a problem, and of course the New Jersey superintendent situation is such that it's been difficult in recent years for continuity and consistency.

SI: Stepping back to when you became the assistant principal at the middle school, can you kind of describe for me the school and the population you were serving there?

WT: Well, when I became assistant principal, the middle school had grades five through eight. I guess, at that point, there were maybe seven hundred-and-some kids in the school. It was an interesting school, interesting town, because there were people that described Pequannock as a town that was kind of plopped down from the Midwest into the Northeast. Interestingly enough, I think that in theory, it was a lot like South River because both South River and Pequannock were both parochial kinds of towns and I use parochial not in a religious sense. I use it in the sense that it's a tightknit community. In both towns, probably more so in Pequannock than South River in a way, kids left and went to college, and then when it was time to raise their families, they wanted to get back into the town. That was really very, very evident in Pequannock. There were a lot of teachers in both schools who graduated from the school and went through the school system. That's what I mean by parochial.

It was interesting, and more so in Pequannock than South River, the student mobility issue was such that I remember dealing with one of my first serious discipline cases as assistant principal, where there was a problem between two kids and the problem happened because the one kid was considered to be an outsider in the school and the new kid on the block. The kid who was not the new kid on the block basically challenged him, and they got into a fight after school. I had to suspend them. Interestingly, both kids ended up turning out to be great kids. So, this was crazy. Trying to get to the bottom of why they were fighting, it revealed to me the prevailing culture in

the school; you were a new kid if you didn't go to kindergarten with the others and be in the same class or in the same school or in the same system for like six, eight years to get into the middle school. I think that was an eye-opener to me because my schooling background was from Baltimore, which wasn't quite the metropolitan area like New York, but it was certainly more of a metropolitan area than either South River or Pequannock. To me, it was kind of amazing that these students didn't have the experience of a lot of diversity.

I think one of the things that I realized early on is that, okay, this is something that I'm going to have to address, because when these kids get out into the world, it's a different world out there. A lot of my efforts as assistant principal and principal was to try to build, as I say, an appreciation for differences, not just a tolerance of differences. We tried to do a lot of work on that and I hope we were successful because, as much of North Jersey is, it is not a tremendously diverse population. It's much more so now than 1988 or 1989 or 1990, when I started in Pequannock. That sort of became a theme for me as I worked through my years as a building administrator.

One of the things I found was that the relationship that you build with the student was really one of the most important facets in encouraging them to be successful. What I've said many times over to teachers and to board members and to the public is that I think the most significant factor in student success happens when they make a positive connection with an inspiring teacher, and ancillary to that, when they find that there's something out there in the world that they really want to know more about, that they want to focus on. I can't tell you how many graduation speeches I've given that had those similar words, because I think it's great advice and it's also true. If you don't have a positive role model to go to, you're sort of floundering around and the positive role model hopefully will also be at home, but you need one at school too. My wish for every student that I've ever had was to have at least one adult role model at the school that they could go to if they had an issue or needed to talk about something. We actually made some efforts over the years to try to identify who those role models were to make sure each student had one, and many schools do that. It's not just my school.

I think that led to my interest in doing what I'm doing today. Early in my principalship, we started to work on character education, and we started it pretty simply using a grant in the mid-'90s, from the State Department of Ed, that provided entitlement funding to schools for working on character education. I don't know, I think the total amount of the grant was like four-and-a-half million dollars. Interestingly enough, the person at the State Department of Ed who really set up that program has ended up being a very close friend of mine and a close colleague in my retirement, because we've been involved in the same organizations.

Interestingly enough, that's what got me started thinking about, "Okay, we already do this stuff." We had what we called focus words, and the very first one we ever had was "Responsibility." Students needed to be responsible and blah, blah, blah, and respectful and all these other focus words. This grant really got us pointed in the direction of character education and taking what we were already working on and giving it more of a label and more substance. The long story shortened was that in 2006, my middle school became one of the first four New Jersey Schools of Character, and it was a relatively rigorous process of looking at your school through the lens of the framework of Character Education. Without getting into too much detail, right now, one

of the many things that I do besides from being President of the New Jersey Alliance for Social and Emotional Character Development, which runs the School of Character in New Jersey now, I'm also on the National Schools of Character Leadership Council for Character Education, for Character.org in Washington, D.C. and I'm the Northern Region Coordinator for the program, in addition to New Jersey. I'm proud to say that New Jersey has the most Schools of Character of any state in the nation. This year, nearly a third of all the schools that were awarded National Schools of Character were New Jersey schools. Again, that's part of my post-education, I'm still a part of education, but it's my post-employment, retirement volunteerism. That's something I'm very proud of. I've worked with some great people in doing that, and we're all volunteers. We do it, why, because we know it's good for both teachers and kids. We do it very altruistically because none of us get paid anything for doing it, just the satisfaction of doing good work. Doing good work is important, and having the feeling that you're productive and doing good work is one reason to get up in the morning. Again, I think that the School of Character piece for my middle school was a really important event for the school.

Then, we got involved with Rutgers. We worked on a project at Rutgers; Fostering School Climate through Character Education was the actual name of the grant. The four Schools of Character were partnered with aspiring schools, schools that wanted to do the work, and we worked with several different schools. This went on in 2007, 2008, and 2009. It was a three-year project. It was really good because when you help somebody else do something, you get better at it yourself, and I think that my school and my team of people gained as much out of the experiences as we taught the other schools. As it turns out, one of other schools we partnered with was just named a National School of Character for the second time this year. That was the school that we did the most work with. All things considered it was a great thing for both schools.

The other thing that I would think back on, actually two other things, when I was principal, we had a project called "Take Action." Did I talk to you about this? There was project called "Take Action" and it was a service-learning project. It replaced the eighth-grade research paper, which was pretty much theoretical, as much as an eighth grader could be, with something that had meaning and required action. What the students would do, and this was every eighth grader, they had to pick something, a societal issue, that was important to them. They had to research the issue. They had to develop an action plan finding some way that they could address their issue. This was all broken down into stages and steps for them. It wasn't like, "Okay, here's the mountain, go climb it, and report back later." It was more like, "Okay, this is what you do first. This is what you do next." The teachers were pretty prescriptive as to how to go about this, and it was sort of the same way that you take a kid through doing research and teaching them how to do it. It was very similar, with the difference being that the end of the whole process, the kid had an action plan that they could address and then it was up to them as to whether they wanted to implement it. The majority of kids did implement it. That was really rewarding to me because every one of those action plans and every one of those projects had to be approved by me before they could go ahead and do it in the school. They had to pitch it to somebody, so they pitched it to me as the principal because I could facilitate them doing it. That was really an important step in the process.

The other thing that I think was significant in my career was being able to provide a schedule that allowed every teacher to have professional learning time every day with the members of their teaching team. That was transformational for the school because it taught teachers, number one, that they had a voice, that they could be engaged in schoolwide issues, and it was a way to distribute and build leadership in the faculty. It was also a way to allow teachers to know their colleagues better and to know their students better. That was another thing I was able to enact at that school that I think was transformational.

We really tried to have a school where whatever a student wanted to do, that they had an outlet for doing it, and not only did they have an outlet for doing it, but they had an outlet for doing it at the highest level that was possible in that situation. Our athletics were very successful, our music program was tremendously successful, this "Take Action" thing was transformational, not for the school, but for the individual kid. There were a lot of great things going on, and the whole thing was based on teamwork, whether it be teamwork between students, teamwork between the faculty, all wrapped up in an environment that was based on mutual respect. I'm really proud of what we did at the school, which is why I told you before I would've been just as happy to retire as principal at that school. But I was asked to do a different job, which I think I did okay at. It was certainly more fun being a principal than it was being a superintendent because the stuff I just told you about, that was fun. It was great to see teachers engaged and students engaged and people learning and people caring for each other, sports teams doing well, and the music program being successful, and other clubs and activities doing really meaningful stuff. It was great. It was fun going to work every day.

SI: Well, I want to pick up on some of that in our next session. I was curious, the story that you told about the student picking on the other student for being an outsider, when you first came to the area, was it difficult for you to kind of break into the relationship with the faculty, to forge a bond, as somebody who comes from the outside?

WT: Well, I think that's always an issue because there's always that moment of, "Okay, who is this person?" I was kind of lucky, because I had a couple of connections to Pequannock that I really didn't know about until I made people aware that I had taken the job. In one case, one of my friends from South River, the parent of one of my best students at South River, was the best man at the wedding of one of the most venerated faculty members at Pequannock High School. He told me a couple of little things about the guy, and he said, "Listen, when you go to Pequannock, you find this guy and you mention these couple things and he's going to look at you like how the hell did you know that? Then, you tell him that we're friends." I did that, and it happened by chance just before school started in the first year that I was there. This guy was like, I wouldn't say he was the patriarch of the faculty, but he was getting close to being that. Just that simple little thing and having a conversation with him, it happened in front of the mailboxes in the main office in August, I think he sort of led the way in terms of saying, "Hey, this guy's okay."

An interesting thing is, and this happens when anybody changes a job in an organization, there are a certain number of people in the organization that relied on the person that was in the job before, who helped them with certain things. It's interesting that a whole new person comes into the job, and you have people coming to you and saying, "Well, your predecessor helped me with

this. Could you help me with this?" Most of the time, I'd say, "I'll try." One of my problems is that when somebody comes to me with a problem, I take it on as my own problem, and that could be a good thing or a bad thing. But I think that was another way to make connections. Now, this happened mostly at Pequannock High School. Throughout the first year, I think that I was able to build a relationship, but it took the year to do it.

It's funny with adult education, somehow, it's not considered a part of the mainstream of the school, and it's very often thought of as belonging to the person that runs it. I think there was a little bit of that when I walked through the door, the program belonged to my predecessor. Of course, a few years before, when he walked through the door, this same program belonged to his predecessor, who happened to still be on staff. Then, it became mine. It was just an interesting way of thinking about things, and the administration thinks that way, the board thinks that way, and it was interesting trying to tell them, "Wait a minute, this isn't Bill Trusheim's program. This is the school district's program. This program is all of ours!" I remember talking to the advisory board of the adult school when I first went there. They were so surprised that I would say that because my predecessor clearly loved the thought that it was his program [laughter], and that was that. But that wasn't my attitude about it. I think with some of those interactions and meeting some folks in town and some folks outside of the school district in town because of the adult school and then making some connections with faculty members, I think by the end of the first year, I was good.

When I went to the middle school, they sort of knew who I was, even though they didn't work with me necessarily, although the art and music teachers did, so they already knew who I was. So, it wasn't that much of a challenge once I got through the very first year. Thinking back, I only remember a couple of times when that would've even been an issue and it was no big deal. For whatever the reason, I guess, maybe my personality or whatever, I was fortunate in not having a problem with that. But you're right, it is a problem sometimes, when people walk into a new situation.

SI: I think we will conclude for today. We can come back and talk more about your career and afterwards, your career as a volunteer educator and policy contributor. Thank you very much. I really appreciate your time today.

WT: Yes, I've enjoyed talking with you and you brought up so much that I haven't thought about for a long time.

SI: Good.

WT: In some ways, it's kind of stunning how these memories flow back, and I hope I've been articulate in talking about them.

SI: Oh, absolutely.

WT: It's interesting because I'm sort of reliving them as I sit here talking to you. In one way, it's kind of an otherworldly experience to do that. Obviously, a lot of what I'm talking about means

a lot to me, so it's nice to be able to articulate that. I appreciate having the opportunity to speak with you too.

SI: Oh, absolutely.

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