RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JOHN G. ZINN

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and
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TRANSCRIPT BY

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William Buie: This begins and interview with William Buie, John Zinn, and John Kasise?

John Kasise: Kasise.

WB: In New Brunswick, New Jersey. The date is December 15, 2016. Mr. Zinn, to begin with, can you tell me when and where you were born?

John Zinn: I was born in Teaneck, New Jersey on December 12, 1946.

WB: Can you tell me a little bit about your parents, starting with their names?

JZ: My father was Henry G. Zinn born in Hackensack, New Jersey, graduate of Montclair State College, public school teacher for many years, World War II veteran, died in November of 2002. My mother was Anna Jean Winder, that's her maiden name, W-I-N-D-E-R. She was born in Trenton, New Jersey, a graduate of Trenton State College. Taught briefly in the High Bridge Public Schools, and then was a homemaker and substitute school teacher after that. She died in 1995.

WB: Do you know how your parents met?

JZ: They met as schoolteachers at High Bridge High School in Hunterdon County, New Jersey. There is no longer a High Bridge High School, but there was then and they were teachers at that school and they met there.

WB: What year were they married?

JZ: They were married in 1940.

WB: Do you have any siblings?

JZ: I have a younger sister, Joann Candy Zinn [married name--LaConte], who was born on October 2, 1949, and is still living.

WB: On your mother's and father's side, was that a close-knit family, in other words, did you have exposure to your grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins?

JZ: Limited exposure to grandparents because of death at my relatively early age. Exposure to cousins on my mother's side in the Trenton area would be the primary exposure.

WB: Okay. Were both your parents natives of New Jersey?

JZ: Yes.

WB: And their parents as well?

JZ: My father's parents were natives of New Jersey. My Zinn ancestors came to this country in 1849. My mother's parents were born in England. They were English immigrants.

WB: Okay. You mentioned that your father served in World War II.

JZ: Correct.

WB: Your father's parents immigrated from where?

JZ: My father's parents were born in this country.

WB: Okay.

JZ: My mother's parents were English immigrants.

WB: Were English.

JZ: Right, right.

WB: Did your father talk to you about either growing up, his experiences in New Jersey, anything that led up to his decision to join the armed forces?

JZ: He was drafted into the military in World War II.

WB: Okay.

JZ: I believe he tried to volunteer.

WB: Okay.

JZ: But was told to go back and wait until you're drafted. This was after Pearl Harbor.

WB: Okay.

JZ: But he was drafted.

WB: Okay. How long did he serve?

JZ: He served from 1943 until the end. He was discharged in March of 1946.

WB: Did he ever talk to you about his military service?

JZ: Yes.

WB: To what degree?

JZ: He served. He was a physical education teacher and for well over a year of his time in the military, he was a physical education instructor in North Carolina at Army training bases. Then, I think it was in October of 1944, he was sent overseas and he ended up in India and stayed in India until February of 1946, when he came home. He was in the Army Air Corps. He was an administrative NCO for barracks for pilots. It was India then, but I think it's Bangladesh now. Next to the Himalaya Mountains, what was at the time referred to as "The Hump." American pilots would fly over the Himalaya Mountains, from India into Burma and China, to supply forces there. So his role was to support the pilots who were flying out of a base in what was then India.

WB: Both of your parents were educators.

JZ: Both of them were teachers, correct.

WB: Did your father talk to you about how he came to teaching and did your mother talk to you about how she came to teaching?

JZ: My father was a star athlete in high school. And then, after high school, he worked at some kind of physical labor for a year and decided he didn't want to do that, and so he went to Montclair State Teacher's College to become a teacher and, I think, all along with the idea that he was going to be a coach and he was a coach for many years. My mother was one of four daughters. Although, she never said this… Well, I think it probably was said. Her parents advised her and her sister to go to Trenton State College. They could live at home, and get a relatively cheap education, and get a job as a teacher, and support themselves that way if they didn't get married.

WB: Okay, so you were born in Hackensack.

JZ: No, I was born in Teaneck. I was born at Holy Name Hospital in Teaneck, New Jersey.

WB: And where were you raised?

JZ: I was primarily raised in Wayne, New Jersey. We moved to Wayne. I was born in '46. We moved to Wayne in 1954. I lived there, that was my home of residence until I got married in 1975, so twenty-one years there.

WB: Okay, and what are some of your earliest memories of Wayne?

JZ: Well, when we moved there, Wayne was a very rural place. Mail was not delivered to the house. We had what was called a rural post office box so that the mail was delivered to a group of mailboxes at the end of the street. So it was very rural. We came from Clifton. We had to go back to Clifton to do our food shopping. It built up, expanded tremendously, during the time I was there. When I graduated from high school in 1964, it was a very big high school and only a year or so later they split into two high schools and it's still two high schools today, so that gives you a sense of how big of a community it is. It was a rapidly growing suburban community with

not a lot of history because very few people had been born there. Most of us had moved from someplace else.

WB: Okay. Tell me some sights, sounds, smells, from growing up in Wayne. You mentioned it was rural. Did you spend a lot of time outside?

JZ: We spent a lot of, yes, when we lived in an apartment in Clifton, before we moved to Wayne and I could always remember my father saying when we move to Wayne you can go out and play anytime. You don't have to worry about getting our permission and that kind of thing. Very rural, a lot of farms at the time, all of which have been sold and turned into housing.

WB: Okay. Where did you attend high school?

JZ: I went to what was then Wayne High School. It's now Wayne Valley High School. But I went to Wayne High School, class of 1964.

WB: Would you characterize your class as large, small?

JZ: It was a large class. It was about 450 students.

WB: Okay.

JZ: My son's college graduating class was about that many, so he went to a college about the size of my high school. It was a big class.

WB: And how did you find high school socially and academically?

JZ: Academically, after not being that good a student through eighth grade, I decided I needed to apply myself in high school and I was in the National Honors Society and was pretty consistently an honor roll student. Socially, it was challenging. I didn't have much of a social life. Social relationships, in those days, you were either in a steady relationship with a girl or you were in no relationship and I was in no relationship the entire time.

WB: You mentioned that you decided that you needed to apply yourself. What led to that decision?

JZ: When I was in the seventh and eighth grade, there was a message out there, both in school and I think also in society, that if you didn't go to college you were going to end up being a ditch digger, so you better buckle down and get into college. There was also a fair amount of talk at that time about there not being enough spaces in college. This was the Baby Boomer generation, so colleges weren't ready for the classes of our size. So those things made me realize I wanted to go to college and I better take this seriously, and I did. I wasn't a straight A student. I was a solid B, sometimes A student, but I was in the National Honors Society and was accepted here without any difficulty at all.

WB: Your parents both have college degrees. You father had an advanced degree.

JZ: Yes.

WB: Did that play a role in your decision to get serious, if I could say that, or not really?

JZ: Not really. The one thing that they stressed was that they had both commuted to college and they thought that they had missed so much of the college experience. They insisted that I live at college because they had missed so much and they didn't want me to miss that experience, so commuting was not an option.

WB: Was it just assumed that you were going to college?

JZ: Yes.

WB: And how about your sister?

JZ: Same thing, although, she went to Cedar Crest College and after a semester didn't like living away from home and moved back home and commuted to Caldwell College for the rest of her time.

WB: When you were in high school, did you have any hobbies or jobs, or things like that?

JZ: No jobs. I was always interested in sports, and I spent the first couple of years in high school proving to myself and everybody else that I wasn't enough of an athlete to make any of the school teams. Then, in my junior year, I became a manager on the baseball team and was involved in sports that way which is something that carried over when I came here.

WB: Okay. Besides baseball, what other sports were you in?

JZ: I was involved in baseball for two years, one year as a manager, one year as a third base coach. Then, in my senior year, I kept statistics for the football and basketball teams. Those were game-day responsibilities. I wasn't a manager and involved every day like you are as a manager.

WB: Were there any subjects that stood out to you then as being your favorite?

JZ: Yes, history and English have always been my favorite subjects.

WB: And what about those?

JZ: I have always had a lifelong love for history, even going back to elementary school. I can remember in the second or third grade, I was happy when they said, "We're going to start studying history." I guess I've just always been interested in the past. And as far as English is concerned, when I was a freshman at Wayne High School, on what would've been called public television today, they did a series on Shakespeare's history plays. It was called an *Age of Kings*, a fifteen-part serial. My freshman high school English teacher told us we had to watch it and I was the only one stupid enough to do so. But, as a result, I became enthralled with Shakespeare's

history plays and I've enthralled in them ever since. That is an interest that has lasted well over fifty years.

WB: Did that lead you to start to read Shakespeare?

JZ: Yes, yes, reading Shakespeare plays. The Shakespeare plays, the history plays, got me interested in my English background, both in studying English history and also, ultimately, in following my own family history. In junior year in high school, besides the SATs, we took Advanced Placement tests and I got over a 600 score in European History, which was a course they didn't offer in Wayne High School. So, I obviously had learned it on my own. I was just very interested in it.

WB: Would you go to the library? Did your parents buy you books and magazines?

JZ: Library books primarily.

WB: Okay.

JZ: Yes, yes.

WB: Do you remember some of the books that stand out to you now?

JZ: The English history books that stand out to me are a series of books by a man by the name of Thomas Costain, C-O-S-T-A-I-N, who wrote a history of English kings from the Norman Conquest through 1485. So, it's about five hundred years. Those books stand out and Shakespeare history plays as well.

WB: Did your mom share the same love of English history?

JZ: Not a love of English history, but of English literature.

WB: Okay, okay. Was that something she exposed you to?

JZ: Yes, she had an anthology called *Literary England,* which was a series of pictures and brief excerpts from famous works in English literature and I remember her sharing that. I still have it. I remember her sharing that with me.

WB: Okay. When you are at home, and you are not reading about history or thinking about sports, did you watch TV? Did you listen to the radio? Did you paint? Did you pay to music?

JZ: Nothing with music or art. I watched sports and read and played sports.

WB: Okay.

JZ: Those would be the three things.

WB: Okay, you read sports magazines or reading about sports in the newspaper?

JZ: Well, reading those, but reading books.

WB: Reading books about sports.

JZ: A lot of fiction. There was the Chip Hilton Sports Series that was written about the time I was growing up. But for whatever reason I got exposed to boy's books that were written for the generation that grew up in the first twenty years of the twentieth century. *The Rover Boys*. *The Hardy Boys* actually comes a little bit later than that, but books like that. *The Boy Allies of World War I.* They weren't contemporary books, but somehow I got interested in them and I read a lot of those.

WB: You tell me, were you reading as much, a little bit more, a lot more, a lot less than your peers?

JZ: More.

WB: At the time.

JZ: Decidedly more.

WB: At the time, you were aware of that?

JZ: Yes, absolutely. Yes, the other thing that I should mention is that my father is a schoolteacher, so he had access to the school library. Baseball was my favorite sport, growing up, and if I wasn't playing it, I wanted to watch it or read about it. So he would get me books from the North Bloomfield Junior Library, or high school library.

JZ: One book that he got was a book called *My Greatest Day in Baseball*. It was actually a series of newspaper columns about the great players of the early twentieth century--Babe Ruth, Ty Cobb. The articles were interviews where they told the columnist about their greatest day in baseball, which were compiled in book form, so it was really an oral history and my father got that book for me. That book hooked me on baseball history. I write baseball history in retirement, and that book was really what introduced me to it.

WB: Who did you root for?

JZ: Brooklyn Dodgers.

WB: Okay.

JZ: Yes, my parents were Brooklyn Dodgers fans. For some unexplained reason, I was a Brooklyn Dodger fan and continued to be Dodgers fan for a about ten years after they moved to the West Coast.

WB: Remind me of what year they moved.

JZ: They moved after the 1957 season. So they started to play there the beginning of '58 and I would say, the Mets won the World Series in 1969 and that was about the time I became a Met fan, switching from the Dodgers to the Mets. [Editor's Note: The Brooklyn Dodgers relocated to Los Angeles in 1957 and became the Los Angeles Dodgers.]

WB: Okay. So, you went from the Dodgers to the Mets.

JZ: Yes.

WB: Not Yankees?

JZ: No, that would never happen.

WB: Right.

JZ: That would never happen, no. National League team in New York, that's what it's about.

WB: And did you ever go to Ebbets Field?

JZ: Unfortunately, I never made it to Ebbets Field. My son and I have actually edited a book about Ebbets Field, but I was never there. [Editor's Note: Ebbets Field was the ball park where the Brooklyn Dodgers played.]

WB: Okay, and did you go to Shea?

JZ: I've been to Shea. Been to both Yankee Stadiums and also to Citi Field.

WB: Okay. Did you father share your love of baseball? Did you go together?

JZ: My father never took me to a baseball game. Both my parents loved baseball. They were both big baseball fans, but we watched baseball on television. They did not go to baseball games.

WB: How did your decision to go to Rutgers come about?

JZ: Primarily, it was my parents' suggestion. Stronger than a suggestion. It was their idea that this was where I should go. My father did some graduate work at Rutgers, although, it was Rutgers Newark. But they thought of Rutgers as a school with a good academic reputation. He was a schoolteacher. My mother didn't work extensively outside the home. So it was affordable, which was important. It would provide the experience of living on campus, but not that far away from home. They really pushed it. I didn't really suggest to them many alternatives, but if I did, they really downplayed them.

WB: Okay, so you were neutral or excited for Rutgers?

JZ: Accepted would be the better word. I accepted their idea that this would be the best place for me.

WB: You just trusted them.

JZ: I trusted their judgement, yes. That's the best way to describe it. As hard as it seems to be today, we never made any campus visits. We never went to a college. I had no idea what they looked like or anything like that.

WB: Okay, your first year at Rutgers is '64.

JZ: Correct.

WB: There's a lot going on both in terms of Rutgers and nationally. Protests at Rutgers are well documented. Many overlap with the time that you were there. Is that hard to imagine? To see that coming? Did that play a role in your parents' decision to attend Rutgers or was that not a factor?

JZ: No, not at all. That was really not on the horizon at that time, certainly not in my high school years. When I came here as a freshman, I had enrolled in ROTC and my father said I should drop it because they were going to eliminate the draft. Now, for whatever reason I didn't drop out of it and I'm glad I didn't because I went in the Army as an officer, instead of being drafted, which definitely would have happened. The scope of the Vietnam War wasn't foreseen. There were civil rights issues, but not a lot of protests. There were some incidents, but if you want to talk about protests, there were no significant student protests about Vietnam until my senior year, '67-'68. So, it was not on anybody's horizon when I came here.

WB: Right. This is really a stark split for a lot of Americans in that a generation before Tet and after Tet.

JZ: Well, actually, I think the dividing point is when Lyndon Johnson decided to commit United States ground forces to the war in Vietnam, which I think is the summer of '66. That's when the war became something more, Vietnam service became more than volunteers and it became a risk for everybody. So, that's really the dividing point.

WB: But even then, well, you tell me from thinking back from that time.

JZ: Right.

WB: Still at that time, there is no concern that this might be a war that the United States is in danger of "losing"?

JZ: No, no, no, right.

WB: Right.

JZ: If there was a concern, it was more along the lines of the United States is not going to bring its full force to bear on this war. The moment we decide we're going to treat this like a serious war, that we're fully committed to fighting, the war would be over in a matter of weeks, which probably would've been true as far as Vietnam is concerned. If there would have been repercussions beyond that, it's impossible to say.

WB: So talk to me about your first year at Rutgers. Moving in was your first time being on campus?

JZ: We took a trip here once, the summer before my senior year of high school and just drove through the campus.

WB: Okay.

JZ: Then, May of my senior year in high school, you had to come here for freshman orientation for one Saturday, so that was the first time I was ever on campus. One of the things I've never forgotten about the freshman orientation was you had to take a language test. It was a placement test to determine what level of the language you were going to study. If you didn't start out with beginners, where you were going to be placed. I had taken four years of Spanish in high school, so I went into Scott Hall 135 to take the test. I sit down, and the kid next to me writes his name on his paper and his name is Jorge Ortiz. I thought, "I'm in a lot of trouble here." It just made an impression on me, what am I getting into here, but I did well enough not to take elementary Spanish. I took second year Spanish as a freshman, as most people did who had any experience the language. That's the only thing that stands out to me about that orientation experience. Then I came here in the fall for freshman orientation.

WB: When you came for orientation, the first orientation, you spent time on campus. Did you spend time in New Brunswick at all?

JZ: No, no. It started at nine. It was over by four. It was all on this campus. Somebody from my high school drove and we walked around. We were in the gym. We were in Scott Hall and the dining hall. I think those were the only places we were in. That's all I remember.

WB: So, what were your impressions of the campus? Or did it make an impression.

JZ: No, it really didn't. It certainly didn't impress me as being large or overwhelming. I went to what we considered to be a large high school. The adjoining town to ours was Pompton Lakes which was a very small town and almost without exception, the kids who came from Pompton Lakes to Rutgers found the size to be overwhelming, but those of us from Wayne didn't find that experience. The size was not overwhelming.

WB: John, do you have a question?

John Kasise: Not at this point.

WB: Okay. Did you have a sense of what you might want to major in early on or did that not come until later?

JZ: My parents had a sense of what I wanted to major in, yes.

WB: Okay.

JZ: As I said, they were schoolteachers and they were determined that no child of theirs would ever be a teacher. Their idea was that you should work in business. They had no idea what business was like, but that was their idea. So they pretty much directed me in that direction and I didn't have a lot of strong thoughts about other options, and so that's what I did.

WB: Why didn't your parents want you to be a teacher?

JZ: I think it's a combination of a romanticized view of what working in business is like, that you just go into this nice office and you work from nine to five. I think that the biggest part of it was that teachers have to do a lot of outside preparation, and they had an illusion that people in business work from nine to five and they forget about it. Having worked in business for thirty-five years, I know that that's not true.

WB: Okay. Were your parents part of a teachers' union?

JZ: Yes, but there was never any labor issues or anything like that.

WB: Right.

JZ: Not that they ever spoke about.

WB: Okay. In terms of majoring in business, was that something you willfully accepted? Did you question it?

JZ: I questioned it a couple times and basically, the responses I got back was that the alternatives weren't really practical. I had some thought about maybe I wanted to be a sports writer, but they suggested that wasn't very practical. I guess being a teacher was the thing I was interested in and every time I brought it up they were just so negative about it, I would ultimately give in. I'm being honest.

WB: Okay, yes, yes. That kind of leads to a larger question that I do not ask often enough. From your perspective--you can tell me and you can tell me what you thought your parent's perspective was--what was the point of going to college? Was it to get a job? To enrich yourself as a human being? Where does it fall along that spectrum?

JZ: Their perspective was to get a good job and a well-paying job. Mine was more that that was what you were supposed to do. If you were a reasonably intelligent person, you were supposed to go to college. That was the way we thought about it.

WB: And you lived on campus?

JZ: Correct.

WB: And do you remember which dorm?

JZ: I lived first in Hegeman and what was then Livingston, but is now Campbell, for my freshman year, and then my last three years I lived in Hardenbergh Hall.

WB: How did you find adjusting to living on campus?

JZ: It was the first time that I had been away from home in fifteen years easily, without my parents. So, it was the first time I had been on my own, but surprisingly, I didn't find it to be that much of an adjustment. It was what was expected. Now is the time for you to go to college and I didn't have a lot of problems adjusting to being here, to being away from home. As most people do, you miss some of the familiarity of the things in high school, but that was about it. Living here and being on campus was not a difficult adjustment for me.

WB: Do you remember anything that the university did either for you or for your classmates to make the transition easier beyond the initial orientation stuff?

JZ: No, I really don't. It was all pretty straightforward about the things you had to do at orientation to register for classes. They broke us down in a way that we had people to contact if we had problems or whatever, but I never felt the need for that. It was obviously a much smaller school than it is now, but still, 1,200 young men is a large number, and they did break us down into groups so that we had faculty advisers and places we could go if we needed to. The other thing I should say though is that the atmosphere is pretty much you're here and you have to be responsible for yourself and nobody else is going to be responsible for you. I learned that lesson the hard way my first semester with freshman calculus, which was a required course for business majors. I wasn't doing very well in it and I just made the assumption that you made in high school that nobody was going to fail you. Well, they did fail me. And I learned from that experience that nobody was going to look out for me. I had to be responsible for myself. I learned more from that experience than I probably learned from a lot of the other classes that I did much better in. So it was a valuable experience. I think that's part of what college is about is learning to be responsible for yourself.

WB: Right. I mean, that is a hard lesson to learn your freshman year.

JZ: Right.

WB: How did you take that? Did it take you a while to kind of wrap your head around it, or was it an instant, "Nope. Okay, I know what I did wrong, let me just refocus."

JZ: I think on the one side, the message that no one was going to take care of me came through very clearly. I wouldn't say that I took responsibility for it. The obvious answer was to study harder and that wasn't my thinking. It was why the test was unfair. And a lot of people failed

the course. It wasn't that I was the only one. There were a lot of people failing that course, so we blamed it on the teacher. But the lesson about being responsible for yourself, that hit right away. I wasn't taking any more chances on that one.

WB: Did you take any history or literature classes your freshman year?

JZ: Rutgers, in those days, your first two years you had to satisfy what were called the general education requirements. So, you had very little freedom in what you could take. You had to take western civilization and you had to take English, freshman English. Those were required courses and I took both of them.

WB: Did you find those courses challenging?

JZ: The western civilization class was a lecture class. I wouldn't say it was especially challenging. I wouldn't say I did that well in it, but it wasn't really challenging. English was challenging because the instructors said something to the effect that, "You don't know how to write. You haven't learned about writing in high school," and they gave us bad grades at the beginning, partially to make us work harder. Looking back on it, I think it was pretty much planned in advance, but it was hard, a lot of people failed freshman English. It was not an easy course.

WB: The kind of, take everything you learned about writing in high school and we are going to show you.

JZ: You're not good writers. I remember the instructor saying that in the first class. He hadn't even read anything we had written but said, "You're not good writers."

WB: Do you remember any of those professors' names? The history professor you had freshman year? English or calculus professor?

JZ: Yes, the professor for western civilization--it was two lectures a week, and then, a small group seminar which was with a graduate student. The history professor was Peter Charanis, who, at one time, was a legendary name here in history of Byzantium and that period, that era of history. English, they were all teaching assistants. I don't remember their names.

WB: Okay. Are there any other classes that stand out to you from your freshman year?

JZ: Calculus stands out because I failed it. I took Spanish and I did well in Spanish because I had had four years of it in high school. So, I did pretty well in that. The other class was ROTC, which then was one class period a week and then eight weeks of what was called drill on Wednesday afternoons. And that was a big adjustment, because I had no idea, putting a uniform on, making the uniform look right, how to march, any of that kind of stuff was very foreign to me.

WB: Why did you do it?

JZ: As I said, I had signed up for it initially, when I was a freshman, before I'd even come here and my father said, "You should drop that." There was a myth at the time that you had to either drop it in the first two weeks or then you were committed for two years and at the *Targum*, in my junior year, did a big expose that this was all a myth. That the ROTC Department thought that the school required it and the school recalled that the government required it. And they found that neither of them required it, so they dropped it as soon as they both realized their error. But when I was a freshman, it was two weeks or two years. I went to ROTC freshman orientation. The officer who was doing the orientation, he said, "All of your classmates in high school who didn't go to college are more likely going to get married and have children in the time before you graduate from college." In those days, if you were married and had children, you were exempt from the draft and so, "They're not going to be drafted and when you graduate you're going to be a prime candidate to be drafted." That sounded pretty logical to me, so I thought I better stick this out. It was a minimal commitment for two years. Then, for your junior and senior year, you had a chance to sign up or drop out again. But if you signed on then then you were committed for two years, and was actually, technically, six years of military service after graduation. So I had the option to drop out, but then the war was going fast and furious, and there was no question that if I didn't continue I was going to be drafted and if I was going to be in the Army, I wanted to be an officer, not an enlisted man.

WB: You were thinking that at the time?

JZ: Oh, I was very clear about that, yes, yes.

WB: When did you start forming opinions on the war? Opinions that you would call your own.

JZ: Even in high school, Vietnam was in the news, but it wasn't a major issue. My opinions were always pretty much what were perhaps not the mainstream opinions on campus, but the mainstream opinions, I think, in society that this was a necessary war, that we had to do this. That as unpleasant as it was, it was the right thing to do. My generation grew up in the wake of World War II and the lesson that was drummed home after World War II was no more Munichs. The British and French appeased Hitler at Munich and they got a war far worse than they would've gotten if they had taken Hitler on at the time. That was the mentality about communism, we cannot appease the communists. So, there was a certain amount of logic, history, a lot of people lost their lives because of appeasement that time. That was pretty much the mainstream thinking for a long time.

WB: Do you remember any discussion in high school or your college years of the difference between what communists might want at large--big "C" communists--and what Vietnamese communists might want?

JZ: No, that distinction was never talked about.

WB: Right.

JZ: Yes, yes.

WB: Was the war something you talked about with your classmates in college?

JZ: What was talked about was being drafted.

WB: Okay.

JZ: That was really the issue. I wouldn't say the war was popular. There were those who were opposed to it and those that thought the Vietnamese people didn't want us there, but the majority opinion was this is a necessary thing, but I don't want to go and what do I have to do to stay out of the draft.

WB: Right.

JZ: The first major protest on campus, in the fall of '67, my senior year, SDS, Students for a Democratic Society took over the Army ROTC building. [Editor's Note: Students for a Democratic Society was a radical student group found on many college campuses during the Vietnam War. It dissolved in 1969.] That was the first real protest. Earlier there was a famous teach-in where Dr. Genovese said he'd welcome the impending communist victory in Vietnam, but that didn't get a lot of attention on campus. It got an attention in the gubernatorial election the following fall, but I don't think there were a lot of people on campus who cared about Genovese or what he believed. [Editor's Note: Eugene Genovese lived from 1930 to 2012. He was a history professor at Rutgers from 1963 to 1967. On April 23, 1965, at a teach-in, he stated, "I do not fear or regret the impending Vietcong victory in Vietnam. I welcome it." In the Gubernatorial Election of New Jersey in 1965, Wayne Dumont lost to incumbent Richard Hughes. Dumont had called for the dismissal of Genovese.]

WB: Students did not see that as a kind of inflammatory statement the same way that it played out to be?

JZ: I think they saw it as inflammatory, but I don't think they saw it as grounds for termination.

WB: Okay.

JZ: I can remember it being discussed and people saying, "It's not a declared war. War hasn't been declared so you can't then insist on the kind of things that you can insist on in a declared war." I remember people who disagreed with what he said, taking that position.

WB: Did you attend a lot of talks on campus? Presentations or guests coming in and speaking on various topics?

JZ: No, no. Class, only classes.

WB: You're continuing to follow sports? Reading magazines and reading sports books? Did you have extra time for that or no?

JZ: I didn't do a lot of reading in college. No, I came here as a freshman with a mission of becoming college basketball manager and I started that in my freshman year, so that was my major activity when I was in school here.

WB: Why basketball and not baseball?

JZ: That's a very interesting question. I could've been a manager in football, basketball, or baseball, because I was interested in all three of those sports. Baseball took a lot of time and it didn't get a lot of attention. I was a senior in high school and I was watching the National Invitational Tournament on television, and I was watching the student managers who were all dressed up like the coaches and acting like assistant coaches and I thought, "That looks really cool. I want to do that in college." Now, I knew that Rutgers had a basketball team. I didn't know anything about the basketball team. Had I known what the team was like then, I might've thought differently. I made up my mind I was going to be a basketball manager here and I was fortunate enough to be a student manager on the '67 NIT team that's observing its fiftieth anniversary this year. So, call it dumb luck, but that was my mission as far as non-academics was concerned.

WB: Two things, one, you mentioned not knowing what the team was like then. Can you tell me what you mean by that?

JZ: I didn't know who the coach was. I didn't know what their record was. I didn't know anything about it. Then, I learned Bill Foster had only come a year earlier. His first team went 5-17. Rutgers had only one winning team in ten years. I remember the first week I was here for freshman orientation, the student who was leading us through it said, "You didn't ask me anything about the football or the basketball team" and said, "The basketball team only won five games last year." That was probably the first time I had been aware of it. There was no history of success in basketball. We had a new coach who was only at the end of his first year.

WB: Can you talk to me about the difference of the NIT and NCAA Tournament, then?

JZ: Absolutely. In those days, there were only fourteen teams in the NIT and only twenty-three teams made the NCAA, so you're talking about just thirty-seven teams that made the post season. Making the NIT was a big deal. The NCAA Tournament didn't get the kind of attention that it gets today. People have a hard time understanding that, but in the first round of the NIT, we played Utah State, who had been offered an NCAA bid and turned it down because one of their players wouldn't have been eligible, and they wanted to play with their full squad, so they played in the NIT. All NIT games were played at Madison Square Garden, which, again, is hard to picture. It was the biggest stage in college basketball. Very few teams got to play there. We got to play there actually six times that one season because of the NIT, but we played there twice in the regular season. It was a very big deal.

WB: Was there an interview process to be a student manager. Can you talk to me about that?

JZ: Yes, again, I didn't know anything about how it worked. They had freshman teams in those days, which of course they don't have now, so I found out who the freshman coach was and it

turned out my high school coach knew him. My high school coach wrote him a letter of recommendation, but then I found the basketball office in the gym and introduced myself to the freshman coach and said I wanted to be a student manager. I got on that right away. Freshman basketball didn't start until November, probably early November. If I had known how it worked, I should've talked to the varsity coach and tried to get involved with the varsity right away, but I didn't have any idea about how any of it worked. So, I came and applied. He got the letter from my high school coach. He liked my high school coach. I think they were going to keep three freshman managers and four came out, and one guy dropped out almost right away, so it was no real competition.

WB: Do you remember that freshman coach's name?

JZ: Bruce Webster was the freshman coach. He was a Rutgers graduate. He was a star athlete here at Rutgers. He coached the freshman team that year, and then he left and went to the University of Bridgeport and was a very successful Division II coach there. He was a good coach.

WB: Were you or your parents concerned about the different activities that you have going on--ROTC, manager, being a student?

JZ: ROTC was really just part of academic life. It was the equivalent to two classes a week and next to no homework. When I was a senior in high school, I kept statistics for the football team. And at the football dinner, the guest speaker was John Bateman, who was the football coach here at Rutgers. His message was that in college there are three possibilities. There is academics. There is athletics. And there's social life. And you can do two of the three, but you can't do all three, which was really not correct, but that's what he told us. And I bought that and my mind was made up that the two were going to be academics and athletics, and probably not, necessarily, in that order. My father had a long career in coaching. He wouldn't have stopped me from being involved in athletics. If I had not done adequately well academically, he might have done something about it.

WB: So you finished your freshman year in good academic standing?

JZ: My first semester as a freshman, I failed one course and I had Bs in every other course. So, it wasn't like I was borderline academics, and I was pretty much a straight B student the rest of my time here.

WB: Okay. Were you going home often, seldom, frequently?

JZ: First five weeks I was here, I went home twice. The second time, my father said to me, "Do you like it at school?" I said, "Yes, I like it very much." He said, "Why you coming home all the time?" So that sent a pretty clear message. Then, the basketball coaches sent an even clearer message that they didn't want you going home, that they wanted you here. I wasn't a player. It wasn't even in season, but they wanted you on campus. They didn't want guys--they were all guys--who went home for weekends. They wanted your focus to be here and if you went home regularly, your focus wasn't going to be on your academics. That was a very clear message.

WB: Did that come verbally in a form of a letter?

JZ: No, it came verbally. Bruce Webster asked me about doing something on a Saturday and I said I couldn't do it. He said, "Are you going home?" And I said, "No, I'm not going home until Thanksgiving." And he said, "Good." They monitored academics more closely than my parents did.

WB: Okay.

JZ: One of my first encounters with Bill Foster, who was the varsity coach and wasn't even that involved with freshman, was about academics. We used to get warning notices, and I got a warning notice in calculus obviously and one in English, and the two coaches were together and they said, "Did you get any warning notices?" And I said, "I got one in English and I got one in calculus." Bill Foster said to me, "What were your SAT scores?" And I said, "600 in verbal and 550 in math." And he just looked at me and said, "How could anybody with those SAT scores get warning notices?" That was the end of the discussion. He was a master of being able to say something to you in one sentence that you couldn't answer and needed to hear. And I was only a manager, but that was their attitude about anybody who was involved in their program.

WB: How did you respond to that? Did you think they were being harsh or too invasive? Did you respect them for that? Did it light a fire under you?

JZ: It lit a fire under me. It was just unanswerable. How could you answer that question? For whatever reason, I didn't try to blame anybody else or make excuses. Bill Foster is one of my heroes in life. One of my most positive influences in my life and he just had that ability to say something to you that gave you direction. You couldn't find an excuse, a way around it, whatever, and he could do it in just a sentence. It was just amazing. Can I digress into something that has nothing to do with me?

WB: Of course.

JZ: Bob Lloyd, who was an All-American basketball player here, told this story in public, so I'm reluctant to repeat it. Again, he was an All-American basketball player, first team All-American basketball player at Rutgers. When he was a sophomore, his parents divorced and he was understandably very upset about it. Coach Foster took him into the stands in the old gym and said to him, "Your mother is still a wonderful person. Your father is still a wonderful person. They're just not wonderful people together." In those three sentences, he helped him find a way that he could deal with it and move on. It's a gift I guess because I don't know how people learn how to do that, but he could do that.

WB: Was there any kind of, how did the coaches provide you feedback on your performance as an assistant coach during your freshman year?

JZ: As a manager.

WB: As a manager, I am sorry.

JZ: You had assignments. Bruce Webster was from the old school that I was familiar with in high school, where if you didn't do something right, you got yelled at. Today, that kind of stuff is frowned on. But at the time, that's the way it was, and we understood that that was the way it was. So if I screwed something up, he yelled at me and if I had an answer, not a disrespectful answer, if I had an explanation, I would give it to him and he would accept it, but he would yell at me. Coach Foster wasn't like that and I think that's one of the reasons why I responded to him so positively because he was much more of a positive motivator. He encouraged you. He made all of us think we were far better than we were. There were times that he would yell at you, but that was not his basic way of operating.

WB: So, with Coach Webster, you knew you were doing well if you were not getting yelled at and if you were getting yelled at all the time.

JZ: If you do your job right as a manager, that's kind of what's expected. It's not like with a player. A player, it's different. Let me say it this way. You don't expect that if you do things right, you're going to get a lot of positive comments about it, under that school of thinking. But he was always appreciative of what I did. Bill Foster was different in that every day at the end of practice he said, "Thank you." He appreciated what managers did because we did a lot of work that other people didn't want to do. There was no glory involved in it, but it was a chance to be a part of the team, but he appreciated it and told you so.

WB: So, talk to me about the summer after your freshman year.

JZ: Summer after my freshman year, well that was where I paid the price for failing calculus. I paid the price in time. My parents paid the price financially because I took the first semester over during the second semester and then the second semester in the summer school. I took second semester calculus in a three-week summer term. So, that messed up getting a summer job, since I wasn't home in time to get a full-time summer job. I got a part-time summer job working for a cleaning company in an office building and that was basically it. That was the only work I did.

WB: Was that your first job?

JZ: It was my first job, yes.

WB: And was it hard?

JZ: Well, it was, at night it was five thirty to nine thirty, so only four hours a night. It certainly wasn't mentally challenging and I didn't find it to be physically challenging.

WB: What did you do with your money from that job?

JZ: Saved some of it and spent it on going to baseball games and sports magazines and things like that.

WB: Okay. So, going into your sophomore year, are you feeling more prepared or are you feeling anxious now? Are you feeling confident or are you doubting yourself about things?

JZ: I couldn't wait to get there.

WB: Okay.

JZ: Yes, I was confident about my ability to handle the academics and I couldn't wait for basketball.

WB: So, the missteps in calculus and English are now behind you.

JZ: Yes, the English thing was just a warning notice which I straightened out by just doing better and I never had any problems like I had with calculus. The other thing that I should say is, I don't know what it's like now, but when we went home for vacations, and especially for the summer, we didn't see our friends. We didn't even talk to them. We didn't talk by phone and so my friendships are now here. They're not back in Wayne.

WB: Right.

JZ: So to get back here was to see not just my friends on the basketball team, but all my friends in college. So, it was great to be back here.

WB: Being home is nice for a little while.

JZ: Yes, exactly.

WB: But then you are kind of like, what is everybody doing?

JZ: Yes, yes, yes.

WB: Okay.

JK: So, during your freshman year, as you are creating these friendships, what are the strongest friendships that you developed? Was it in the ROTC circle? Was it at Hardenbergh? Was it with the other guys working for the basketball team? What was your primary?

JZ: First of all, it would be basketball, far and away, basketball. Then, people in the dorms and people in classes, not just ROTC. ROTC, I don't know what it's like now, but a lot of people took ROTC. You probably were in the minority, but you were not unique. Classes were grouped by alphabetical order, so I was with the people at the end of the alphabet. I was in a lot of classes with them, so my friendships came from there, my dorm and basketball, especially basketball.

JK: Did you keep a lot of the same friendships going into sophomore year or did you find it harder to keep in touch with the same people?

JZ: It wasn't hard to keep in touch because in those days, everybody lived on this campus. Only a few students lived across the river, but everybody else was on the College Avenue Campus. Now, one thing that happened that changed friendships was fraternities. You could not pledge a fraternity until second semester of freshman year and some people went into fraternities and tended to form those friendships there. I didn't do that. Those relationships changed. You made friends with people in the dorm that you lived in and the basketball team because new guys came in and other guys left, but there were the guys in my class who I stayed friends with pretty much for the whole time.

WB: So sophomore year, talk to me about that from the beginning. What dorm were you staying in?

JZ: Sophomore year housing was the hardest housing to get because they reserved dormitory rooms for freshman. They didn't want freshman to come to college and not have a dorm room and after that, it was based on seniority. Sophomores therefore were at the bottom of the seniority system and to make matters worse a group of us wanted to be in the same dorm, on the same floor, so we requested to be put in the same dorm and none ended up together. I didn't actually find out until the week before I came here what dorm I was going to be in and I got somebody else, not the guy that I had asked for to be my roommate. Then, the guy I wanted to room with also was with somebody that he didn't want to room with, and so they went in together, and we went in together and that's how it got straightened out, but it took a month into the semester. There were some people who ended up living in the basement under Demarest until they could find you a room.
WB: Oh, wow.

JZ: It was not a lot of fun.

WB: Wow. Do you know people that that happened to?

JZ: Oh, yes, the guy who was the best man at my wedding. It happened to him freshman year and sophomore year.

WB: What did they do with their belongings?

JZ: I don't remember. It was pretty bizarre, but I was fortunate enough that I was spared that. So I was in Hardenbergh. Sophomore year, I took American history and art history. That's the first time I was ever exposed to art. You had to take two humanities, and so that was one of mine and pretty much everybody took art history. It was standard humanity course for sophomores at that point in time.

WB: Why?

JZ: I'm not sure, but it was a good course. It was a lecture twice a week and one seminar-type class, again, in Scott Hall and it covered art history from beginning to modern time. *Janson's Art History* book was the standard textbook and I think it still may be today.

WB: Do you remember the professor's name?

JZ: I don't. It wasn't one professor.

WB: Okay.

JZ: They had different lectures for their specific areas of expertise.

WB: Oh, okay.

JZ: But you had to take two humanities and history didn't count, psychology, none of those things counted. They were social sciences. You didn't have a lot of options. I guess art history was probably the most common choice. That was the first time I had never been exposed to art and I still remember some of it. It was an enjoyable course, and my other humanities was an English course. Previously, sophomores used to be able to take a survey course of British literature. Unfortunately, they eliminated the course that year, and they introduced a course called "Interpretations of Literature," which I took without thinking about it. I thought it was going to be British literature, but it was very different. It started out with a lot of James Joyce, who I did not then, and have never since, been able to understand or appreciate. It was not a pleasant experience, but I got through it. So what else did I take? I took Spanish. I took ROTC still. Oh, accounting. That was my introduction to accounting. Because I was going to be a business major, you had to take accounting. It was just something I hadn't been exposed to before, but it was fine. I was a solid B student. I don't remember having much difficulty with courses that year. I had some difficulty with accounting, second semester; that would've been the only time.

WB: What was the difficulty with accounting?

JZ: I don't know. I got off on the wrong foot with the teacher. He asked me a question and I didn't know the answer, and then he said I should do the homework. I had done the homework. I just didn't know the answer and he didn't want to hear that. We had two hourly exams and the first one came the day after the basketball banquet, so the timing couldn't have been worse. So I didn't do very well on that one. I did a lot better on the second one and ended up with a C in the course, but it was more drama than it needed. But the rest of the classes were fine. I think the only As I got at Rutgers were in Spanish and American history, that year, sophomore year.

WB: Do you remember your teacher of American history?

JZ: Well, it wasn't Dr. Genovese. First semester it was Walter Poulshock who resigned in 1966 because he fabricated sources for his doctoral dissertation and book "The Two Parties and the Tariff in the 1880s." The professor for the second semester was Warren Susman, whose field was American history. [Editor's Note: Warren Susman taught at Rutgers from 1960 to 1985. He died suddenly while giving a comment at a conference in 1985.]

WB: Okay.

JZ: Yes.

WB: You are managing the varsity team?

JZ: Right, now I'm with the varsity, right.

WB: Was that a forgone conclusion or did you have to interview again? How does that transition happen?

JZ: It was kind of a foregone conclusion if you were doing a good job you were going to move up. And by that point, I had established a relationship with Coach Foster and with the other managers and the managers worked at both levels, so you weren't just a freshman manager in isolation. I knew I was going to be part of it. October 15th practice started and the season went through early March like it does today. So, it was an ongoing thing from then on.

WB: Okay. I want to see if I have been taking this for granted. Was the freshman managing experience seen as a pipeline for varsity managers or not necessarily?

JZ: It was a training. You did the same things. But as a freshman manager, for home games, you had assignments for the varsity games. So even if the freshman weren't playing, for a varsity game I had things to do. The way it worked in those days, freshman played a preliminary game, and then the varsity played, but I had to do things for the varsity as well as for the freshman. So, you really managed both. You were part of both.

WB: Right from the beginning.

JZ: From the beginning, but you weren't part of the varsity team. Freshman managers weren't invited to the team dinner nor were the players, that's the way it worked.

WB: In your sophomore year, you are a varsity manager, how different was that experience or was it very similar?

JZ: Different only in the personality of the coaches, because you didn't have the yelling from Bruce Webster, which is what I was used to. And I don't want to make more of that than it was. It was the way we were brought up, and it was the way it was and it wasn't abusive. But I was now used to Coach Foster's style. You no longer had the sarcasm and the yelling that you heard and experienced when you were a freshman, but it was also a lot more serious. Freshman basketball was serious, but this was a lot more serious.

WB: Well, the stakes are higher.

JZ: Yes. This was a lot more serious. Rutgers was a school that had no tradition of winning basketball. He was a young coach, ambitious coach, and he wanted to turn this program around and he won five games in his first year and that didn't sit well with him. The big thing that year was to have a .500 record, because Rutgers had only had one plus in a decade, and that would have been a real achievement. He expected you to take it seriously and looking back on it, and

not just my own perspective, but he's putting his livelihood on the line here. We don't win, we're not successful, he gets fired. I won't mention a name, but one of the best players goofed off the year before academically and was academically ineligible for the second half of the semester and he was a smart kid, but he just goofed off. He's not only putting what we might want to achieve at risk, he's putting a coach's job in jeopardy. That's not right. Coach Foster taught us to be responsible. He didn't say we were doing it for him, but this is serious. It's not just a game.

WB: That is an interesting perspective. One, he is a young coach. Young coaches often do not get a lot of time. You have no reputation that people can harken back to.

JZ: Right, right.

WB: And he wants to win now.

JZ: He wanted to win.

WB: I mean, well.

JZ: It wasn't.

WB: Well, not immediately.

JZ: Yes, but that's important. He recognized he was building a program. Sometimes coaches who want to win now cut corners, and he would never do something like that.

WB: Well, that plays into what I was going to say also, it is also his job and so this is something that is a project for him.

JZ: Right.

WB: Right?

JZ: Right.

WB: Did you feel that sense of obligation at the time to him and the program? Not only is this a sport, we want the team to win, but this is somebody's livelihood.

JZ: That part of it, to tell you the truth, it's something I only thought about in recent years.

WB: Oh.

JZ: But I had bought into him when I was still a freshman and that this was important and that we all needed to take this seriously. But, as I say, it was only the past couple years I realized that this was his livelihood. It was never about him. I would see him years later and try to thank him and all he would do was deflect the compliments and thank me. So, it was never about him.

[TAPE PAUSED]

WB: Well, I think we are going to pause for right now and we are going to continue this conversation at the next interview session.

JZ: Another time, okay.

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

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