

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH ROSS BAKER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Shaun Illingworth: This begins the second oral history session with Dr. Ross Baker of the Political Science Department at Rutgers University for the Rutgers Oral History Archives, on Thursday, November 19, 2020. This is Shaun Illingworth in Hightstown, New Jersey. Jessica, could you say your name and where you are now?

Jess Aumick: My name is Jess Aumick, and I am in Hackettstown, New Jersey.

SI: Dr. Baker, could you also just tell us where you are?

Ross Baker: I'm in Highland Park, New Jersey.

SI: Last time, we had an overview of your career and how you got into the study of American government, but that was after a couple changes in your career focus. I want to go back to when you were in graduate school at the University of Pennsylvania. What was the focus of your study then?

RB: It was still focused on international relations and foreign policy, defense policy and so on. It was while getting my master's degree that I became acquainted with Dr. William Kintner, who was a retired U.S. Army colonel who was teaching at Penn and taught a course in defense policy that I took. He and I became acquainted, and he liked the work I did. I got my master's degree, but I was little bit tired of Penn. I decided I was going to change locales and maybe perhaps try a different program, a different doctoral program.

I applied for a Woodrow Wilson Fellowship to the University of California at Berkeley and went out to Berkeley. It was, of course, a completely different world. It was my first time in California, and it was a really remarkable experience. Being in the West and of course being such a bred-in-the-bone Easterner, I found it fascinating and liked it very much. I had, however, acquired a fiancé, who was an undergraduate at Barnard, and while I was studying out there, I was confronting the choice of perpetuating my relationship or getting my doctorate and staying in California and ultimately resolved to come back and resume my relationship, my personal relationship, with my fiancé, which in the course of events evaporated anyhow. So, I found myself with neither a graduate program, nor a fiancé. [laughter] Just hold on a second. [Editor's Note: William Kintner (1915-1997), a member of the Class of 1940 at West Point, served in the Army from 1940 to 1961, retiring a colonel. Kintner earned his Ph.D. at Georgetown University in 1948. A foreign policy expert, he taught at the University of Pennsylvania from 1961 to 1985.]

[RECORDING PAUSED]

RB: I was very much taken with California, but having been born and bred in the East, you become accustomed to where the sun rises in the morning. [laughter] In California, [it is] a lovely place but too many natural distractions. It was always tempting to put down my books and get in the car and drive up to wine country. Actually, my closest friends there were naval officers who were in a program that the Navy had established at Berkeley. So, I hung out with them, rather than with the students who were then in a state of incipient rebellion against the University of California, which would a couple of years later burst into large-scale

demonstrations in Sproul Plaza at the university and you make Berkeley, in some ways, the center of the uprisings in the 1960s. That was another reason--I just wasn't part of that. I wasn't, by nature, a protester. I think probably the politics of it were pretty much to the left of my views at the time, which I think were influenced very much by hanging out with the Navy guys.

I came back and, as I said, I came back for personal reasons. It was to reconnect with my fiancé, and we promptly broke up. As I was left with neither a fiancé nor a graduate program, I went to see Dr. Kintner at Penn. He said, "Oh, welcome back." At that time, he was not only on the Penn faculty, but he was the director of an organization called the Foreign Policy Research Institute, a research institute that basically focused on strategic studies. It was funded, in large part, by the Air Force Office of Scientific Research. The institute had a very definite--not hard right wing--but certainly conservative orientation, as I think most of these defense think tanks had at the time, including the Hudson Institute and the Hoover Institution and places like that. So, it fit into that pattern of Herman Kahn's work and Albert Wohlstetter's work in strategic studies and so on.

It was here that I became involved in this Operation Spice Rack, which I mentioned earlier, which was an effort on the part of the United States government to make life as difficult as possible for the Castro regime in Cuba. The assignment that I drew, which I look back upon with some distaste, was basically studying the use of certain agricultural chemicals, herbicides, to be used on Cuban crops. We were gaming out the use of these various herbicides, including one particularly obnoxious chemical which would have destroyed the banana crop and another one which would have gone after the rice crop and so on. This was distasteful to me, but as graduate student who needed a job, I'm sure this is the kind of rationale that many people used in joining extremist movements and so on, for the paycheck, but that's the way it was.

I struggled through the program largely for political reasons, and it's really odd. The Department of Political Science at Penn was physically housed in the Wharton School, at Dietrich Hall on the campus in Philadelphia, but like political science departments elsewhere, including Rutgers, [it was] very fragmented. There were people in the Political Science Department and there were people at the Foreign Policy Research Institute and then there were political scientists scattered around elsewhere. The department where I was going to get my degree--in international relations, by the way--was badly split by, interestingly, the methodological revolution in the social sciences, the introduction of quantitative research. For somebody who was raised in a more traditional political science environment, this was a tough adjustment for me to make. The department had basically evolved into two warring camps. I was associated with one of the warring camps, which was the more conservative, traditional view of political science, but the examining committees consisted of people who were quantitative. So, it involved both a political adjustment for me and an intellectual adjustment basically to get through the qualifying exams from people who did not wish me well.

It was really quite interesting because in the Rutgers Political Science Department, as far back as I can remember, the ethic of the department was to get people their doctorates and get them teaching. At Penn, at the time, it was to thwart the careers of people who were in the opposite school of thought. It was a very hostile environment. [laughter] It was more like law school. I

remember my qualifying exams involved some questions in comparative politics that were posed to me by one of the people who, I think, was trying to make life as difficult as possible for me. He asked me a question that I believed he thought was unanswerable by me, and it had to do with the credo of the Chinese Nationalist Party. It was almost like a Jeopardy question. He said, "I don't suppose you know what the founding principle of the Chinese Nationalist Party is, do you?" It was asked in that kind of hostile, edgy way. I said, "San Min Chu-i." I thought he would fall off his chair. [laughter] How do I know this? Because in sixth grade [laughter], we had a class project on China, and we all learned the Chinese Nationalist national anthem, which was "San Min Chu-i," which was the principle of the Guomindang, which was the party of Chiang Kai-Shek, the Nationalist leader who was forced to flee to Taiwan after 1949. The idea that I was able to reach back to a class project since sixth grade and absolutely floor this man who was sure that this was going to be the question I could never answer, it gave me the greatest satisfaction. I got a kind of sadistic delight out of his discomfort in that situation. It was this got-you attitude that they had. So, I managed to get through those qualifying exams and was awarded my degree.

The question was what do I do with this degree, but I had channeled myself into this strategic military studies area. I had done quite a bit of it at the Foreign Policy Research Institute, taking a lot of courses in it. I became very much interested in the development of military institutions in Africa. I went around looking for a job. At the Foreign Policy Research Institute, there was a colleague, someone who had come there as a visiting fellow from MIT [Massachusetts Institute of Technology], named David Schwartz, who told me about this organization in Washington, D.C. called the Special Operations Research Office. Had I been a little bit more astute at the time, I would have realized that the words "Special Operations" had a very distinctive meaning in strategic studies, which was basically guerrilla warfare. At any rate, he recommended me to a very well-known and noted sociologist named Rex Hopper, who was the head of the Special Operations Research Office. It was, in a very interesting way, a kind of Manhattan Project of the social sciences. It brought together some of the most eminent social scientists in the country to deal with the problem of insurgencies in the developing world, and my area of the developing world was Africa. Characteristically, of course, what happens is when you have an interest in a particular area, they find another area of the world that you should get interested in very quickly. With all the background I had in African politics and so on, they decided that I should become an expert on Argentina. [laughter]

I really got quite deeply involved in studying about Argentina with the object in mind of going down there and doing research. I don't know exactly what they had in mind. I mean, I suspect this was basically an intelligence-gathering operation. I never really got to the bottom of it because it was cancelled as a result of an exposé in *The Washington Post*. A journalist by the name of Walter Pincus had picked up on the project, and it seemed to him a little bit sinister in a way. So, there was a big story in *The Washington Post* about it, and just the publicity caused it to be cancelled.

So, I was able to make a kind of hasty exit from that and lined up a research associate position at the Brookings Institution. I may have said that I got my degree; I want to correct that. I had finished my qualifying exams. I had not written my dissertation. My dissertation was written partly while I was at the Special Operations Research Organization and also at the Brookings

Institution. I was able, because I had gotten a top-secret security clearance, to actually go to the Pentagon and go through some of their papers in regard to the Military Assistance Program to countries in Latin America. This was when I had been assigned to study Argentina. So, I got a pretty good sense of the archives that they had and was able to use them for my dissertation. I used only unclassified materials in my dissertation, because I know that you cannot publish a dissertation that can't be archived at the University of Michigan.

I wrote my dissertation citing sources that I had gotten access to and realized that I really needed to get it cleared by the Pentagon, even though, as I say, I did not use secret information. Nothing that I used was classified and much of it was very old. It was really information that went back to the 1950s, and I couldn't possibly imagine it would be any problem. But what happened was that the Pentagon slapped a classified stamp on it, which meant I really couldn't submit it as a dissertation. It was a classified document. Of course, this was, I thought, an insurmountable obstacle. I wondered how I could deal with it.

Well, there were a number of military officers who I got to know when I was with Special Operations Research. I went to one, Colonel John Johns, who was a very good friend of mine and was later to become a general in the United States Army, and I said, "What do I do about this?" He said to me, "Well, Ross," he said, "Somewhere in the Pentagon, there is a lieutenant colonel. I don't know who he is, but if we can track him down and make the case that this is a dissertation that needs to be declassified, he's the guy we have to find." [Editor's Note: Brigadier General John Johns served in the U.S. Army for twenty-six years. He retired in 1978 as the Army's Director of Human Resources Development.]

We went on this search in the largest office building in the world for the one person who had a stamp or who had the ability to remove a stamp on a classified document and downgrade it to simply a non-classified document. By golly, we came up with the guy. Indeed, he was a lieutenant colonel. He was an Air Force lieutenant colonel with the typically characteristic military name of Buck Burlando. I went to visit Buck Burlando in his office in the D-ring of the Pentagon. I kind of threw myself on his mercy and said, "Look, I have a dissertation that I can't submit for the archive in Ann Arbor, and I need somebody to look at this and declassify it for me." Anyhow, he did that. He said to me, "I cannot find anything in here that is either secret or semi-secret or even particularly sensitive." [laughter] He said, "This is old stuff." He said that the classifications on it should have been downgraded years ago. It was a terrible time. I remember this would have been the spring of 1967, and here I was with a completed dissertation, which had been approved by the dissertation committee, but was, for all practical purposes, unusable because of some of the materials that I had access to.

Of course, once I got over that hurdle--I mean, that was a major obstacle that really gave me many sleepless nights--I was able to take that to the Brookings Institution as a fully accredited Ph.D. and became a research associate at the Brookings Institute doing a project that I was very well qualified to do, which was to work on a project on the development of military institutions in Africa. I worked with a man named Ernest W. Lefever, who was my senior collaborator on this project. I fully expected that this was a project that because I was going to be doing traveling--I was going to go to Africa and do research and interview members of the military in in various African countries--that this would be my first publication. It would be, obviously, a

collaborative publication, but it would be published by Brookings, which would be a very good credential to take with me to whatever academic job I was ultimately going to get.

I did all of the legwork on the project. I did all the fieldwork. I went to Ghana. I went to Sierra Leone. I went to Mali. I went to Senegal. I went to Nigeria. I spent a lot of time in West Africa. I spent a lot of time with soldiers and discovered, of course, that these were people who basically had grown up as soldiers in colonial armies. When independence was granted, they became the military of these newly independent countries. Some of them had taken courses at Sandhurst in England or Saint-Cyr in France, depending on what the colonial power was. I got to know and like a lot of them. They were very gracious and there was a kind of openness that I found in people in West Africa. I kind of envied anthropologists, who could really kind of hang out there and really get to know these countries. [Editor's Note: Royal Military Academy Sandhurst is a military academy of the British Army. École spéciale militaire de Saint-Cyr is a military academy of the French Army.]

Anyhow, I wrote up most of the project. Then, the question was--what names would appear and in what order on the cover of this study? Ernie Lefever, my collaborator, said, "Well, here's the way it's going to be: Ernest W. Lefever, with the assistance of Ross K. Baker." I said, "No deal." I said, "I don't want to be listed that way. I'm a full collaborator. I did all of the fieldwork and I think it should be Lefever and Baker. I don't care what order the names are in, but I just want them in the same type face." But he was he was senior to me and he simply said to me, "No, that's not the way it's going to be." I appealed his decision to Kermit Gordon, who was then the president of Brookings, who gave me a lesson in Washington think-tank politics, which was, "Listen, Ross, I know you did the bulk of the work. It's a shitty deal, but you can either accept what Lefever is offering you in terms of credit or walk away from it." I decided to walk away from it. It was a big risk because what it meant was that when I went on the job market, I would not have that Brookings publication. But for me, it really was a matter of principle. I know a stance on principle can be really costly, and this one turned out, at least in the short run, to be costly, but in the long run, it turned out it really didn't matter.

As I mentioned the last time we spoke, I met, at Brookings, an Israeli scholar who also did research on the military in the developing world, a man named Amos Perlmutter, a lovely guy, who is responsible for my being at Rutgers. He knew Ben Baker, the chairman of the department, and said, "I will recommend you to him." He said, "I know the raw deal that you got here. I think it was really shameful and the fact that the president of Brookings couldn't back you up," he thought was particularly despicable.

At any rate, I got the introduction and came to New Brunswick and was introduced to the somewhat Byzantine world of political science at Rutgers University in 1968, on a campus that was on the verge of major uprisings having to do mostly with the Vietnam War. As I mentioned in my last discussion with you, the fragmented nature of the departments at Rutgers in political science was no exception, with these various departments, a Rutgers College department, a Douglass department, a soon-to-be Livingston department, whose creation, by the way, was opposed by the Rutgers College department. So, the relationship between these departments was not very good.

There was, however, something called the New Brunswick section, which, in a sense, there was a super chairman for New Brunswick, a very eminent scholar of international relations named James Rosenhau. Jim Rosenhau really tried to hold together this Holy Roman Empire of people speaking different languages and different cultures. He tied it together in a very interesting way. He had a luncheon every Friday at the University Commons on College Avenue. All the departments, the component departments of New Brunswick, were invited. He was also the director of graduate studies. So, it was the graduate program that held it together. This was the glue for these three otherwise unconnected departments.

These Friday luncheons were rather interesting affairs, because we were kind of told by of the senior members of the Rutgers College department that these other departments were lacking in legitimacy. They weren't serious. They were too small and the people that were in them were kind of radical in a way. But I came to understand that we were all in the same boat, and I developed very strong relationships with people in the other departments. I was not about to let these jurisdictional lines stifle my relationships at Rutgers, which put me, by the way, crosswise with my patron, Ben Baker, and the other senior members of the Rutgers College department. I was seen as being disloyal because I had friends at Douglass and I had friends at Livingston, particularly Gerry Pomper, who had come from the Rutgers College department on Union Street and had gone up to be the first chairman of the Political Science Department at Livingston College. [Editor's Note: Gerald Pomper is Professor Emeritus of Political Science of Rutgers. He joined the faculty at Rutgers in 1962 and retired in 2001. Dr. Pomper's oral history resides in the collection of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

Then, of course, I committed the supreme apostasy, and that was I supported for promotion someone that the senior members of the department at Rutgers College did not want to see promoted, a colleague of mine named Gordon Schochet, who was a political philosopher and my roommate. We both inhabited a room on the second floor of 36 Union Street, a room that was oddly constructed. I think probably the foundations of the building were in the process of collapsing, because the floor was sort of like a flat funnel. There were two desks, mine and Gordon's, and if you sat on your desk and put your feet up and you were on a swivel chair with casters, you would gradually drift to the middle of the room. [laughter] We'd find ourselves at times back to back in the middle of the room. It was kind of quaint, but that was the department that I was associated with. I had voted in favor of Gordon's promotion, and he was opposed by the senior members of the department, which really didn't make me any friends.

At the same time, I had already developed a pretty good record of publication and went up for promotion in 1971 and was promoted to associate professor on the strength of work that I had done mostly on the armies of the developing world, mostly focused on Africa. I think I enjoy the distinction of probably being the only person to have ever written an article for *Learned Journal* on the navies of post-independence Africa, which was always a source of amusement to some of my colleagues. These were promotion-worthy articles.

I also had a book. I became very much interested in the connection between Africa and the African American community in the United States and put together a reader called *The African American*. I used a title that later became, of course, the kind of definitive designation for Americans of African heritage. So, I was now an associate professor. I also had a new baby.

My daughter Susanna was born in 1971 at St. Peter's Hospital in New Brunswick. Jim Rosenau left the department to go to Ohio State University, which left us without a graduate chairman and without, moreover, a unifying force in the three departments, three major departments in New Brunswick, four if you include University College, which had a two-person department. So, there was a need for a new graduate chairman/New Brunswick chairman, and I was approached to do the job as an associate professor.

It was a big mistake on my part because I found myself without Jim Rosenau's good sense of bureaucratic politics and national reputation and managing these warring entities and meting out resources with the few meager resources that came with the office and directing the graduate program, which was really the main job. I tried to continue Jim's Friday lunches, but after a while, that kind of lapsed. That was really a product of Jim's personality. [I would] just try to preside for at least a period of three years over this department. My location moved. I was now on the Douglass campus, in the arts building on the Douglass campus. I had one assistant. I shared the floor with Harry Bredemeir, who was New Brunswick chairman of the Sociology Department, a wonderful guy and a good neighbor to have. He and his administrative secretary, Bell Sicorella, were enormously helpful to me in just learning the ropes.

So, I presided over this odd collection, this dog's breakfast of departments, for three years. It put me in the awkward and painful position of trying to enforce certain regulations on people who were senior to me. In one particularly fraught conversation I had with a senior colleague, he and I had been colleagues together in the Rutgers College department, he reminded me that I was still "an associate professor." The implication in that statement was that were I to come up for full professor at some point, I could expect problems. I was running into these problems throughout my entire career to this point, which was basically getting past people who did not wish me well and trying to do it through guile or charm or whatever.

What happened was I gave up the job after three years. By that time, the departments were unified as a single department, and our headquarters changed from these three disparate locations at Lucy Stone Hall for the Livingston department and the Douglass department, which was at Hickman Hall, and the Rutgers College department, which was at 36 Union Street, we all united in the 1949 vintage Hickman Hall, arguably one of the greatest architectural atrocities of the Rutgers Campus, any portion of the Rutgers Campus. I would hold up the ugliness of this building to anything that was put up at Livingston, including Lucy Stone Hall, and some of the more architecturally undistinguished buildings up there. We were all together, somewhat uneasily at first. Ultimately, we became a cohesive department and, in many ways, an important department. We had among us now--yes, a question.

SI: I am curious, this might be a good time to ask. What were the specialties of the department when you joined? Then, once all the departments came together, what strengths did you see among the professors?

RB: Shaun, that's exactly the question I was about to broach, and that is we found ourselves with a very distinguished collection of political philosophers. This was a big department. There was a lot of duplication, but one of the things that we had, in the Livingston department,

there was an extremely eminent political philosopher named Wilson Carey McWilliams, just known familiarly as Carey McWilliams. We also acquired from the unhappy department at the University of Pennsylvania, a man who was as unhappy with Penn as I had been, Benjamin Barber, who was, again, a real superstar in political philosophy. So, we had two people. We had Gordon Schochet, who had gotten tenure at Livingston, whose expertise was in Renaissance political philosophy in England, John Locke, Thomas Hobbes and so on. It was really interesting and we were able to develop real strength and expertise in that area. I thought at the time that when you have a strength like that, it may be a good thing to build on.

I think everybody wanted, in the department, diversification. We wanted to cover all fields. We had a lot of duplication. We had a number of Africanists. My background was in African studies and the militaries of the developing world. Barbara Callaway was an Africanist. She had done fieldwork up in northern Nigeria. We acquired Lucy Creevey Behrman also from the University of Pennsylvania. I mean, we were basically raiding Penn for really good people. We were developing an extraordinarily strong department, both in comparative politics, African studies, and in political philosophy.

I was basically making my exit from comparative politics in Africa into American government and largely because this was a case of, again, confronting a situation, not of my own making and certainly not under my control at all, of the fact that American scholars were no longer welcome in much of the developing world because of the association of some American scholars with projects that were sponsored by the Central Intelligence Agency. My choice in the early 1970s, now that I'd gotten tenure, was to lie low and wait for the clouds to roll by, but who knows how long that would have taken for American scholars, particularly non-African American scholars, white scholars, to be welcomed back in Africa and also to feel comfortable in the African Studies Association. There was a real uprising on the part of black scholars against the presence of white scholars in the African Studies Association. So, it became not just uncomfortable but really intolerable.

When I was presented with either the opportunity or the chore of teaching American government, because there was no one to teach it and there's no department of political science anywhere in the United States that doesn't teach "Intro American Government," "Political Science 104," it fell to me to do that. I gradually made the transition. I continued to teach some courses in comparative international relations, but clearly my trajectory was in the direction of American government.

All along, I really did understand and was willing to acknowledge the fact that we had this enormous strength in political philosophy. Our best graduate students were in political philosophy, and our placements were really very, very good. Because of our strength in political philosophy, we were vying typically with the University of Chicago and Princeton, so we were in very fast company. This would have been in the beginning and the mid-1970s. It is possible that we could have done for political philosophy what the University of Rochester did with formal theory in political science, which was really to say, "Look, this is what we do. We realize we're not going to cover all the bases, but the base that we do cover, we're going to excel in." But what happens, of course, is that people get footloose. They get offers from other universities. Carey McWilliams died, which was a great loss to the department.

I proceeded with American government and, of course, came to the realization, after teaching American government for a couple of years, that I really needed some Washington experience. I needed to get down there and get a sense from the inside of how things worked. I felt, in some ways, that I was shortchanging the students. I used good textbooks and gave them good supplementary readings and so on, but I really couldn't give them the richness and the texture of American government unless I experienced it at firsthand. I'm kind of an expeditionary learner. I've got to go there and take the temperature and feel the pulse of an institution, and that's what took me to my first sabbatical in the United States Senate in 1975 and 1976.

It involved a considerable sacrifice on the part of my family, which meant uprooting us, renting our house in Highland Park, which we had just bought. When we first moved to Rutgers, we lived in a garden apartment development called Orchard Gardens in Highland Park, which was a kind of off-the-shelf, cookie-cutter New Jersey garden apartment complex. We had a one-bedroom apartment. Once the baby came, we needed something larger, and we bought a house on Hill Street in Highland Park, between First and Second Avenues. So, we rented that house and went to Washington.

I used the opportunity, while I was commuting to the Hill, to Capitol Hill that is, I used to take a bus every morning called the Chevy Chase Express, which made a nonstop trip from Chevy Chase Circle to Capitol Hill, and I took with me my reading matter. I was reading up on American government on the bus and experiencing it firsthand in the office of three United States senators and trying to put it all together. Shaun, I saw your hand go up.

SI: You talked last time about the different offices you worked in, but I would imagine you were not just there observing. Would you be doing things for the staff?

RB: I had a job, which was which interesting. The first two sabbaticals I took in Washington, I had a real job. The one I had when I was with Senator Mondale was a little undefined. He put me in the hands of one of his senior staff members, a man named Bert Carp, who became a lifelong friend. At that time, this was 1975, so it was the first year that the Senate Budget Committee was in operation. In 1974, the Budget Act was passed by Congress, which created in both chambers of Congress budget committees, a Congressional Budget Office, and the annual budget cycle, which now governs the spending of the federal government. The [Senate] Budget Committee, at that time, because the Democrats were the majority party, was chaired by Senator Edmund Muskie of Maine.

Our offices were in the Carroll Arms Hotel, at First and C Streets in Washington, which was a rather notorious place. It was the home of an organization called the Quorum Club during the administration of President Lyndon Johnson. The Quorum Club was run by one of Majority Leader Lyndon Johnson's top staff people, a man named Bobby Baker. Bobby Baker was a real Washington-style fixer. Basically, he had wild parties and orgies there with members of Congress, with lobbyists, and he would bring in women for entertainment. It was really a sordid operation, and ultimately it became a kind of congressional scandal. So, the Quorum Club was closed down, and the Carroll Arms Hotel ceased to be a hotel and became a congressional office building. It has since been demolished and made way for a parking lot,

which is the ultimate humiliation for any structure with any self-respect, to be just a flat stretch of tarmac.

For me, Bert Carp was my guide and mentor. He was a lawyer, a Stanford Law graduate from San Antonio, Texas, and he knew everything. He would take me to hearings. He would basically sit next to me and say, "Okay, this is what they're doing. The chairman is basically setting the agenda for this meeting, where it's going to be a markup, which means they're going to amend the bill," and so on. All of this was very, very detailed knowledge that I couldn't possibly have gotten from the best textbook in American government. It really gave me not just the flavor of Congress but a sense of how it worked. He would often correct me. He would say, "Well, that's a kind of textbook idea that you brought." He said, "This is the way things really operate."

I remember we went to a hearing having to do with an interesting piece of legislation which was aimed at banning of the addition of lead to house paint. The National Institutes of Health had come out with a report showing that small children were attracted to peeling paint, typically on the window sills of low-income apartments and so on, and they were getting lead poisoning, which was affecting their brains. Democrats in Congress really felt that this was something that needed to be stopped. Of course, one of the things was the high content of lead in house paint. Lead had been used in house paint forever because it was the substance that allowed the paint to adhere firmly to the exterior of a house, and to remove it would have been a real problem for painting houses.

The complication that involved Senator Mondale, who represented the State of Minnesota, was that lead-based house paint required the use of linseed oil as part of the mixture. Unlike non-lead-based paint, you had the lead in there, but you also needed linseed oil. It turned out that Minnesota was a major producer of linseed oil. Here was a liberal Democrat who was confronting a choice that he had to make, which was the health of children in poor communities, whose brains were being adversely affected by ingesting the lead in interior house paint, with the needs of his constituents, who were who were flax farmers, which was the source of linseed oil in Minnesota. It gave me a sense of what happens when good public policy conflicts with political realities. I watched Mondale struggle with this. He was a very decent and principled man, and this was a tough call for him. It gave me a sense of the kinds of decisions that people in politics have to make when principle and political requirements clash.

I learned a great deal in Mondale's office, but other than going to hearings, I really felt I wasn't doing anything. I wasn't contributing. I wasn't earning my keep. So, I began to look around for someplace else to go. Someone, and I don't recall who it was, recommended one of the Democratic senators, who unlike Senator Mondale, who had declined to get involved in the 1976 Democratic nominating contest, had made a decision to go ahead and involve himself and seek the Democratic presidential nomination. That was Senator Birch Bayh of Indiana, and that's where I had got my first real job.

I was his speechwriter. I learned something about being a speechwriter, and that is that you are the producer of elegant and sometimes inspiring prose that doesn't get used. I learned the secret that if you've been a successful politician, you have a speech. You have a narrative that you

can present that you have used time and time again. It has your imprint all over it. It's got your anecdotes and your recollections and stories about your youth. It's just so well known to you that the best prose provided by a speechwriter are just often used as a prop. Sometimes, they will even say, "Well, my speechwriter wrote elegant speech for me, but I'm going to stick it in the pocket of my jacket and tell you what I really think." [laughter] It's really demoralizing for a speechwriter.

I traveled with Senator Bayh to several states and observed the spectacle of his not using my speeches. [laughter] The other thing was that when we would sit together in adjacent seats in the airplane, I really hoped to engage him in conversations that were going to lead me to a deeper understanding of him and of the United States Senate, but very often what he wanted to do was sleep. [laughter] It would have been really impolitic of me to try to disturb this poor man's sleep pestering him with questions about unanimous consent agreements. Even that turns out to be a learning experience, and that is that running for president is a very exhausting and rigorous process. It means traveling to a lot of places and greeting a lot of people. Birch Bayh, by dint of his personality, was much better suited to that. I can understand why Mondale, who was a much more private person, as he said, he just couldn't stand the sight of another Howard Johnson hotel room, but it didn't bother Birch Bayh.

He was, by nature, an extrovert. He was somebody who could walk into a room cold and immediately win over an audience. I mean, sometimes his ebullience got a little bit out of control. Actually, this happened in Indiana, his own state. He went to a political meeting of one kind and saw an old southern Indiana Democrat and, as in typical Birch Bayh fashion, slapped him on the back, and the man had just had back surgery and it sent him into paroxysms of pain. [laughter] It was just typical of him, as goodwill run amuck. I enjoyed him very much, but more than that, I enjoyed working with a really excellent staff of dedicated people who loved Birch Bayh, understood his shortcomings. He could be really corny. He was right out of Shirkieville, Indiana. It was that Indiana farm boy charm, I think, that so many people liked, but underneath that--I think I made this point last time--he was probably one of the most underrated United States Senators of the time.

He had a real interest and a real concern about presidential succession. He was really the author of the 25th Amendment to the Constitution. He did it in a way that in a sense came up as a problem for Joe Biden this year in the Democratic primaries, and that is he had to run a gauntlet of Southern segregationist Democrats who were the chairs of the major committees in the United States Senate at the time. None was more fearsome or more set in his belief in the superiority of the white race than James O. Eastland of Mississippi, Chairman of the Senate Judiciary Committee. I guess it's one of the things that bothers me about what's been referred to as presentism, and that is the inability to look back at the context in which somebody was operating in a different age and hold them to our enlightened standards. This is what Kamala Harris basically did to Joe Biden, the man who ultimately chose her to be his vice-presidential running mate, and that was, "Why did you kowtow to these segregationists?" The answer was that all Democrats kowtowed to these segregationists, not because they liked them, not because they, in any way, subscribed to their primeval feelings on race, but rather because they were the chairmen of the committees, that you couldn't move legislation without sweet-talking these dinosaurs. [Editor's Note: In the U.S. Senate, Birch Bayh chaired the Subcommittee on

Constitutional Amendments, which produced the 25th and 26th Amendments. The 25th Amendment establishes the procedures for replacing the president or vice president in the event of death, removal, resignation or incapacitation. The 26th Amendment decreased the voting age to eighteen.]

I remember Joe Clark from Pennsylvania telling me [that] he had campaigned against Eastland in Pennsylvania when he first ran for the Senate, and he just really went after him hammer and tongs. Clark gets to the Senate and finds himself placed on the Judiciary Committee, and here he has spent his entire campaign bad-mouthing James Eastland. He decided, "Well, I've got to visit the chairman of my committee." So, he somewhat timidly made an appointment with Eastland and went in to see him. He said, "The first words out of my mouth were, 'I want to apologize, Senator Eastland, for some of the things I said about you in my campaign in Pennsylvania.'" Eastland kind of waved his hand and said, "Oh, hell, Joe, I know what it takes to get elected in Pennsylvania, and if you need to put down old Jim Eastland to get to the United States Senate, that's perfectly fine with me. I'm sure you'll be a great colleague." What do you do with that? [laughter] I mean, these guys were the gatekeepers. You just couldn't get through the front door without having some kind of working relationship with people like Strom Thurmond, who ran as Dixiecrat president in 1948 because Harry Truman had desegregated the military. He wouldn't support him for the presidency. I was so struck at that moment in the Democratic debate when Senator Harris basically brought Vice President Biden up short with her comment about his kind of fraternizing with the segregationists. I shook my head and said, "I know that it bothers you, but it was a different world." The Senate was a very different place in 1975.

Bayh's campaign basically didn't go anywhere. He didn't win a single primary, and he was defeated by--as everyone else was, and there were seventeen Democrats running that year for the nomination--nobody could quite figure out Jimmy Carter. He was the mystery man. Whatever mojo it was he had, whatever secret sauce it was, he had it. There were some people who were running against him who were really experienced politicians with a lot of campaign experience, but Carter managed with his platitudes basically to convince the American people that he was a godly man. He won over evangelical Christians. He was himself an evangelical Christian, but he was a Democrat. He was opposed to segregation. He was a Southerner opposed to segregation, so something new in the Democratic Party. He was unfailingly polite, always smiled. He was a peanut farmer from Plains, Georgia, and he defeated some of the most experienced politicians in America.

When I left Senator Bayh after his failed campaign and went with Senator [Frank] Church, which I mentioned last time, who had delayed his entry into the 1976 campaign because of being the chairman of Foreign Relations Committee and conducting the hearings on the CIA abuses in the '60s and '70s, so he started late and, basically, it was clear by that time that you had to start early, at least a year early, and here he was starting in the year of the nominating contest. So, other than winning Nebraska, he didn't get very far. He also won American Samoa, which was kind of interesting. [laughter] I became the delegate from American Samoa to the Democratic National Convention in 1976 because the folks from American Samoa couldn't get to the convention in New York. I was sent as a Church delegate and represented American Samoa, which I did proudly.

Those were the jobs. I was Church's speechwriter too, and Church did tend to use my materials more than Bayh. I felt a little bit more fulfilled in that regard and established just a very, very warm, personal relationship not just with the senator but with his family as well. I went to his announcement address, which he made in Idaho City, which was an old gold-mining town in the panhandle of Idaho. It was really a great experience. So, I knew that I wanted to go back.

I got a serious, terminal case of Potomac fever, but I was able to now teach American government from an entirely new perspective. I could say to the students, "I know your textbook says that this is the case, but it's more complicated than that and this is why." I turned out to have made lifelong friends among my first students. I kind of grew up with them. It's very interesting because as a group, many of them became very eminent journalists who went on to these remarkable careers in journalism. Others went into the academic world and so on. I taught the Henry Rutgers seminar and these people were real stars. I said, "If the rest of my career at Rutgers is blessed by students of this caliber, I'm going to be a very happy person." I don't think that really in terms of the sheer brilliance that any of my subsequent students, as good as they were, ever matched that Class of 1968. It was just an astonishing collection of great minds and people with whom I just had a lifelong attachment.

SI: That might be a good segue to talking about campus politics at that time, when you came in '68, '69, '70. The antiwar movement was becoming a big issue, but there were issues surrounding African American needs and representation and women's role in the university. Your name comes up a lot in the documents we are looking at now, particularly as we are looking at the late 1960s.

RB: *Targums?*

SI: Yes. How did you first get involved? Was it through your students and what the students were doing at the time?

RB: Yes, it was inevitable and it's really amazing, looking back on it, how faculty meetings, campus-wide faculty meetings, were attended by hundreds of faculty. Deans have a real trouble now assembling a couple dozen faculty members, and the issue has to be usually a very pressing one to get a full house these days. But, then, people were in a constant state of agitation, the students. It was contagious. Certainly, the faculty certainly felt it. A lot of these kids were destined to be pulled into the Army and go to Vietnam, so they had a real stake in what happened with politics at the national level. Clearly, the Vietnam War was the issue. When you throw in the fact that really since the mid-1960s the ferment in the African American community was just growing exponentially, the assassination of Dr. Martin Luther King and the events at Orangeburg, South Carolina, Kent State, all of these things were bringing campus politics to a boil. What can a university do other than stand up for a principle? I participated in demonstrations. At one point, we actually blocked the trains that were coming through New Brunswick Station between New York and Washington. That, I think, was probably unwise and certainly didn't make many friends, but there were constantly demonstrations. [Editor's Note: On February 8, 1968, after protests to desegregate a local bowling alley in Orangeburg, police officers fired into a crowd at South Carolina State University, killing three African

American men and wounding twenty-eight others. On May 4, 1970, during the nationwide student strike to protest the expansion of the Vietnam War to Cambodia, Ohio National Guardsmen opened fire on anti-war protesters and bystanders at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine. On May 14 and 15, 1970, students at Jackson State College protesting against racial harassment were fired upon by state and city police, resulting in two deaths and a dozen injuries.]

Students broke into the office of President Mason Gross. President Gross was some something of a bon vivant, and a wealthy alumnus had given him, I think, it may have been a whole case of vintage Pedro Domecq Spanish brandy, which he kept in his office. [laughter] As I remember, when they seized his office, I went to Old Queens to see what was going on. Here was a student with his feet up on Mason Gross's desk with a bottle of this vintage brandy in one hand and a peanut butter sandwich in the other. But that was Rutgers in 1969. [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. The strike began at Rutgers on Friday, May 1, 1970. 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. Mason Gross served as the president of Rutgers from 1959 to 1971.]

You had this very uneasy relationship between the white radical students and the black students. I mean, their causes were congruent to a degree, but there was also a lot of tension there. I think it really comes down to what came to be defined as white privilege, that, "However just your opposition to the Vietnam War is, you think you've got problems, listen to what we have to say." In a sense, there was a kind of rivalry for public attention on campuses, whose cause was the most urgent and the most just. This, I think, was really the story of the Rutgers campus for the latter part of the '60s and the early part of the '70s. It really didn't end until 1974 and the withdrawal of the Americans from Vietnam and the resignation of Richard Nixon. So, you threw together Vietnam, the grievances of the black community in America, Watergate, and it was a time of constant turmoil.

It also spun off all of these weird movements that developed spontaneously and sometimes almost theologically from the ferment on campus. One of my favorite students, one of my prized students, I'm not going to name him because I suspect that he's still around and doing the same thing, became an acolyte of a far-right crackpot agitator named Lyndon LaRouche, who espoused all of these incredible conspiracy theories. He believed that Queen Elizabeth of England was basically setting up a corner on the gold market in the world. It was one conspiracy theory after another. It roped this guy in and he became a kind of living zombie. You'd run into him handing out LaRouche's literature at the New Brunswick Train Station, and it was kind of pathetic. You had people who were involved in the movement of the farmworkers, and they would picket Pinot's Wine and Liquor Store in Highland Park because they sold California wines that were picked by workers who were trying to organize under Cesar Chavez in the United Farm Workers union. So, it was a kind of sampler of causes. If you wanted a cause and you couldn't find it, you could start one of your own.

People became interested in the occult, which really bothered me. I mean, it's one thing to believe in political change, social change and so on, but to sort of embrace the supernatural. I'll give you one example. I taught a course at Livingston at the time on American politics through literature, and I used a lot of contemporary novels about American politics. I remember I gave an exam, and one student wrote, I thought, a particularly deficient essay on a Gore Vidal novel and I gave them a "D" on it. He came to me, he actually sought me out, and he said, "Professor Baker, you must have made a mistake." I said, "Well," I said, "I'll read it over again, but I don't think I made a mistake. I don't think it was a very good essay and I think I was actually generous in not flunking you." He said, "Well," he said, "that's quite impossible," he said, "because my horoscope said that I would get an 'A'." I found it difficult not to laugh at him, but he was quite in earnest about that. He said, "The stars really lined up for me on this one, and clearly you've made a mistake." It was very difficult to argue him out of that position. I think he felt that not only he was being dealt with unjustly but that somehow my approach to grading was almost deviant, that I should have been guided by the Second House of Capricorn or something. [laughter] I don't know exactly what it was.

It was that kind of atmosphere; it was just a kind of hothouse of movements and causes. Things didn't really quiet down until the mid to late 1970s. I just think in some ways it was Jimmy Carter's normality, his utter Southern, down-home, aw-shucks politics, plus Christianity, that really appealed to people. He said, "I will not lie to you, the American people." After Richard Nixon, when somebody says, "I won't lie to you," that was a pretty ambitious promise and I think he meant well.

He was a failed president in many ways. He succeeded in some important things, certainly in his Middle East diplomacy. But in other ways, particularly with dealing with the energy crisis, [he was] much less successful. Of course, ultimately, it was the Iran hostage situation that brought him down, the 444 days of captivity for Americans in Iran, which was the agenda item. I can remember sitting with my daughters at the breakfast table. Every morning, Ted Koppel would get on and talk about another day in Tehran with the hostages and the death-to-America demonstrations. The country was just riveted by it, and Ronald Reagan, whatever he did behind the scenes to get them free was really the key to his victory in 1980, which also, of course, sets me up for my second sabbatical. [Editor's Note: On November 4, 1979, a group of militant Islamic students raided the U.S. Embassy in Tehran and took sixty-six Americans hostage. This happened in the wake of Ayatollah Khomeini's seizing power during the Iranian Revolution of 1979. President Jimmy Carter imposed sanctions upon Iran. A military rescue mission ended in failure, as two aircraft collided and Carter aborted the mission. Eight American servicepeople were killed in the collision. Upon the inauguration of President Ronald Reagan on January 20, 1981, the hostages were released.]

I decided that having spent some time and worked in the Senate, I would try to line something up for the House of Representatives. It turned out that it was the Democratic Caucus in the House of Representatives and its chairman, Congressman Gillis Long of Louisiana. Again, this was Ronald Reagan's first term, and the Democratic Party was in shambles. The Democrats had been the majority party in the United States Senate since 1958 and in the House of Representatives since 1954. They held on to the House of Representatives. They were going to

lose it in 1994. It was going to be a while. They did hold on to the House of Representatives. The Democratic franchise was very, very strong in those days.

Reagan was enormously successful in a way that Donald Trump has been successful in capturing a political party. It was Ronald Reagan's Republican Party, as the present Republican Party is Donald Trump's Republican Party. It was really quite something to see Democratic House members really intimidated by Reagan, because they could see how much their constituents were attracted to Reagan and Reaganism. I'd watch the agonies of the damned that they went through as they tried to reconcile their being Democrats with the increasing disfavor with which Democrats were held in what used to be known as the "Solid South," which if it was solidifying in any direction, it was solidifying in a Republican direction.

It ought to be remembered that Ronald Reagan kicked off his career in Philadelphia, Mississippi, in Hines [Neshoba] County, Mississippi, the place where three civil rights workers were slain and buried in an earthen dam. That was a message. That was the stars and bars. That was the Confederate flag without the flagpole. It was Reagan saying, "I'm your guy." Certainly the so-called Southern strategy of the Republican Party confirmed Lyndon Johnson's prediction, when he signed the 1964 Civil Rights Act, that, "I'm signing the death warrant of the Democratic Party in the South." We could see from the congressional portion of the 2020 election how difficult it is for Democrats to hold on to seats in the South, poor Joe Cunningham, First Congressional District in South Carolina, a good member of Congress, Class of 2018, wiped out. There are very few white Democrats left in the South. The only Democrats to get elected in the South are members of the Congressional Black Caucus because of the Voting Rights Act of 1965 and the creation of the majority-minority congressional districts. They, of course, represent a major force in the Democratic Party, and certainly we could see that in the enormous influence that Congressman Jim Clyburn had in resurrecting the Biden campaign in 2020 from death's door and making him the nominee. Shaun?

SI: You have talked about this major shift in party alliance, but you were working with one of the old Democrats, Gillis Long. How did you see this playing out in front of you, so to speak, in his office?

RB: Well, in a sense, the doom of the Democratic Party was written on the career of Gillis Long. He was somebody who believed in civil rights. Although a distant cousin of Huey Long and Russell Long, he was somebody who was very much a mainline Democrat, a national Democrat. He would not have been chosen as the caucus chairman had he not been a bridge between the diminishing influence of Southern Democrats, because of their precarious political situation in the South, and the party which would come to be dominated by Northern Democrats. He was an interlocutor. He was a very easygoing guy who got along with everybody. He was a good fundraiser, but very much a transitional figure. You use that term advisedly when you talk about people. I mean, it's been used to describe Vice President Biden or President-Elect Biden as a kind of transitional figure, largely, I think, because of his age. There was no daylight between him and civil rights. It might not have gone down that well in Baton Rouge, but it wasn't anything he really hammered away on, I will say that. He was right as far as the energy industry in Louisiana was concerned. He put together a kind of advisory council, which ultimately mutated into something called the Democratic Leadership

Conference, which was very influential in Bill Clinton's rise in the Democratic Party, the DLC, but it was basically composed of Southern members and lobbyists from the energy industry.

There was a guy, I think his name was Wayne Lafontaine, a typical Louisiana name, who was a lobbyist for Freeport-McMoRan, which was a big energy company in Louisiana. They were supporting the Democratic Party, but they were supporting the version of the Democratic Party that had been dominated by Texas oil people and so on. It was Lyndon Johnson's Democratic Party, which was, obviously, marching into obsolescence. I guess if I had been Tolstoy and been able to sit on the battlefield at the time and reflect on who was killing whom, who was winning the battle [laughter], I probably would have understood the conflicts in a more synoptic way rather than as a series of anecdotes.

By the way, I think I should point out that every day I spent in any and all of my sabbatical experiences in Washington, I kept a daily log, which I occasionally consult, basically, for factual purposes, to see if I'm correctly remembering something. One of the things is, I think that there are people who are natural diarists, the Samuel Johnsons of the world, who really know how to write a day book, who really know how to keep a log and write a diary, who are thoughtful and perceptive and just have a keen sense of the importance of what's going on. That pretty much eluded me. [laughter] I was more interested in the daily petty dramas that were going on, staff conflicts and the peculiarities of members of Congress and things like that, which were kind of fun. But there were important things going on that if I had been, I think, a more reflective person, I would have sat under an olive tree and thought about these things in greater depth. [laughter] I mean, I was much more interested really in the flavor of the time rather than trying to attribute longitudinal meaning to these events, saying, "Where does this fit in history?" Later on, I was able to look back and say, "I understood that this was pretty significant, this period."

The Democrats were embracing what came to be known as industrial policy, which is basically the government picking winners and losers as to where they were going to subsidize industries. That was an extremely divisive theory, because what it meant was that the declining industries, such as steel and even cars at the time, since the Japanese were deluging the United States with high-quality automobiles, and putting your money in high tech--I mean, the first time I heard the word high tech was in 1983 and it was actually at one of these "Walk to Washington" conferences that New Jersey politicians do every year. They would get on the Metroliner and go down to Washington and basically meet the members of the New Jersey congressional delegation. I remember, I guess it must have been Governor Kean, at the time, talking about how New Jersey should be a high-tech hub. I just thought, "That's an interesting term," but I can put my finger on the day in 1982 or '81, in which I heard that term for the first time. Sometimes, it takes a while to process these things and you think to yourself, "Why wasn't I more perceptive at the time, and why didn't I understand the importance of it when it was happening?" as Tolstoy probably was able to do.

What happened after my year in Washington, D.C. was coming back to Rutgers, and that would have been in 1983. My family life was changing. I was headed in the direction of a divorce, and life was complicated. I maintained my interest in American government. I continue to teach it. Sometimes, when you're going through a lot of personal turmoil, getting deeply into a

research project is a real distraction, a relief, a haven in many ways. It was during that period that I wrote *House & Senate*. I had already written *Friend and Foe in the U.S. Senate* based on my first experience in Washington. Now that I had had experience in the House of Representatives, I felt that I could properly and legitimately speak about the comparison between the two chambers. It happened fortuitously, as I mentioned in our last conversation, that I was actually asked to give a talk on the subject. I discovered that there was no book that actually had between two covers a straight-out comparison between the House and the Senate. It sent me in that direction. In some ways, it was the most productive research experience of my life. I published a second book with the Century Foundation, which was published by the Brookings Institution--ironically enough, a publication I could never get out of Brookings in 1967, I got out of it 1987--with a book called *The New Fat Cats* about congressional leadership PACs, political action committees.

The combination of personal turmoil and going through this sort of intense period of research and writing, I really wanted a break. In 1991, I applied for a Fulbright Fellowship and was given a choice of countries. Actually, I had, years before actually, thought about applying for a Fulbright to Iran, of all places. Of course, the revolution in Iran put an end to that, but I thought I would give it another try in a place that was less likely to prove to be tumultuous and disappointing, and it was Sweden.

I was granted a Fulbright lectureship in Sweden for the purpose of lecturing about American government in Sweden, in Swedish academic institutions. My original home would have been the University of Uppsala, which is the old cathedral town northwest of Stockholm, but for some reason that fell through, which was very disappointing. But the Fulbright office in Stockholm said, "We have what we think is a really good substitute." I said, "Well, what is that?" They said, "The Swedish Institute of International Affairs, *Utrikespolitiska Institutet*," in Swedish, located in the Old Town, *Gamla Stan*, in Stockholm. I thought, "Well, gee, being in the capital city of Sweden sounds, in some ways, even better." It turned out, of course, that the institute was just down the street from the Riksdag, the Swedish parliament. I got really excited about it, really fired up. I said, "I am going to go to Sweden, and I am going to fit in, like I fit in in Washington. I'm going to try to accommodate myself to this new environment. I can't become a Swede, but I just don't want to be a tourist."

One of the things I decided to do was I wanted to learn Swedish, not even to be fluent in conversation, just to know some useful phrases. So, I went Barnes and Noble and I went to the travel section and looked for language instruction. At the time, everything was on tape cassette. I was looking around and there were books about Swaziland and so on, but couldn't find much on Sweden, oddly enough. But I did find one language tape, which was a two-cassette set of common phrases in Swedish. Anyhow, I had a tape deck in my car. I would drive around, and I would memorize these phrases. It wasn't just the phrases themselves. It was the accent. I wanted to perfect what I was saying to sound like a Swede. If I'm going up to a bank and changing dollars for krona, to say, "*Vad är växelkursen*" and make it sound like I really knew Swedish [laughter], although that was just one of the phrases on the tape.

Anyhow, I was on the plane. I was on the SAS plane from Newark to Stockholm. I had the overhead light on, and those are very bright. I really had a chance to examine the cassette. I

noticed on the cassette was the label that said, "Copyright 1953," and the thought occurred to me that I was learning phrases that may no longer be used in Sweden. If you can imagine how we spoke in 1953 in the United States, the phrases that we used and so on, particularly slang changes a lot. My worst fears were confirmed, but it turned out it was a source of great amusement to the Swedes because I was sort of a linguistic Rip Van Winkle, who was coming back [laughter] and speaking and using phrases that people hadn't used in Sweden in forty years. [laughter] It was something that people always commented on. They would say, "My goodness, I haven't heard that phrase in years."

It's really funny because people said that Swedes were hard to get to know. I didn't find that was true at all. I made friends in Sweden that I have to this very day. In fact, I got an email this morning from a good friend of mine, Gunilla Herolf, who follows American politics very closely. She's actually the person who met me at Arlanda Airport when I got off the plane in January 1992 and with whom I had lunch almost every day while I was in Stockholm. Everybody was on kind of a limited budget. At that time, Sweden was not part of the European Union, and the restaurant choices were not great. Mostly, they were restaurants run by refugees from Afghanistan, Pakistan and places like that in the Old City in Stockholm.

I found myself very much at home there. One particular friend, (Erland Johansson?), invited me to what they call the Children's Christmas, in which the Swedes, at the end of Christmas actually, will dance around the old Christmas tree that's been stripped of all of its ornaments and they throw it out the window. It's really a joyous occasion. It's not a melancholy event at all. I had come there right after Christmas.

I began to get to know my colleagues at the institute. I would ask them what they did and inquire as to what their research was, and I was able to go around the country and talk not only to university audiences but to civil society people, rotary clubs. I spoke to a group of--Sweden had, and I believe still does have, a very ambitious program for the unemployed to keep people's minds fresh with seminars for these groups. I did those.

I traveled to University of Lund in southern Sweden, right on the border with Denmark. I went up to Lulea and Umea, just near the Arctic Circle, and arrived in Umea to give a university talk on a cold day in February. I was not dressed for the weather, and one of my Swedish friends looked at me and said to me, "Stand in the middle of your trousers." I said, "What are you talking about?" [laughter] He said, "Don't allow your trousers to touch your skin, " to leave this vapor barrier between your leg and the fabric of your trousers. [laughter] It was really quite interesting to be that close to the Arctic Circle.

Then, something happened at the end of my stay, which touched me very deeply, and that was my colleagues at the institute threw a farewell party for me. Somebody said, "We have never done this for a visiting scholar," and I almost cried. It was absolutely an enormously emotional experience, knowing that I had fit in to the extent that I wasn't simply a bird of passage who was going through. It's interesting because Bo Huldt, who was the director of the institute, I think felt a little bit embarrassed because he felt that he hadn't done enough to get me out speaking to audiences. He said, "I shouldn't have let you hang around the institute. I should have put you on the road more." He himself was in the process of trying to leave the institute

and get a job with a think tank in Great Britain. So, I think he felt a bit guilty. But I established a relationship with the institute and with his successor, which caused me to get invitations to come back to Sweden many times and also to be the guest editor of *Internationella Studier*, which was one of their publications and which was really quite an honor to be the guest editor of a Swedish journal. I would write my articles in English and they would be translated in Swedish, but just the idea that I had managed to integrate myself into this community of scholars in another country, for me, was just a great experience.

Oh, something funny happened, actually, while I was in Sweden. The chairman of my department at that time was Richard Wilson, who was a dear friend of mine. He had decided to put me up for--it was then known as--Professor II, now distinguished professor. He got all my papers together and my publications and so on and had forwarded it to the dean. Apparently, I had gotten very good letters from colleagues in the field, mostly people in American government, which would be natural. It was the academic vice president at the time, Alec Pond, who was a real hardnose, and he said, "Yes, Baker's got a good reputation in the United States, but does he have an international reputation?" I think Wilson said to him, "Well, it happens that just now Professor Baker is a scholar-in-residence at the Swedish Institute of International Affairs," and that satisfied Alec Pond. [laughter] I had international cred. So, it was just a great experience.

I'll tell you something funny. My attachment to Sweden has persisted, not just in my relationship with individual friends in Sweden but also the word *hygge* is used these days as kind of the comfy nature of the culture. Every year since coming back, usually in the dead of winter, when it's dark and cold, I have a Swedish party, my wife and I. Basically, what we do is we go up to Ikea and get all of the Swedish specialties and have candles all over the house and in the windows, just to cheer up the winner, which the Swedes are just so good at. When you're in a country where, in January, the sun sets at two o'clock in the afternoon, you really need something to raise your spirits. So, that's sort of the purpose of my Swedish party. One of the sadder things having to do with the shutdown of our country as the result of the pandemic was our cancellation of the Swedish party, which was scheduled for mid-March this year. It just wasn't safe to have. I was inclined to go ahead with it, but I think the consensus among the people that I invited was, "Let's not do it. It's just too dangerous."

That was another phase in my career. That was a major departure. I pat myself on the back for that because I think you really sometimes at a certain point in your career want to follow the course of least resistance and stay in the groove, so stepping out of it gave me a good feeling about myself. I see Jess has a question.

JA: Did living abroad shape your outlook on American politics in any way? Is that something you continued to study while you were there?

RB: Yes. I was there when Bill Clinton was running for the Democratic [nomination]; the presidential nomination process was in process. So, I was basically able to talk about the presidential election process to Swedes, who are keenly interested in the United States. One of the things that had struck me so strongly about Sweden was the attachment that so many Swedes have to the United States, by reason of the great immigration that took place from

Sweden at the end of the nineteenth century and the practice among Swedish families, middle-class Swedish families, to send their kids to the States for the senior year in high school. On the Stockholm subway, I saw this jacket that said, "Hunterdon Football." I said, "You're from New Jersey?" He said, "Well, no, I was an exchange student for a year in New Jersey." [laughter] So, there is this natural attachment. Yes, it did. Certainly during an election especially, it gave me some sense of how somebody in another country would make sense of this process of nominating, party nominations and presidential elections, which unfold in a much more orderly way in Sweden, for one from the dominance of the Social Democratic Party in Sweden. I was there actually at a time in which the Social Democrats weren't even in power. There was a Conservative Party in power at the time, but Sweden has since reverted to the norm and the Social Democratic Party is still the party there.

To see a country, to live in a country with such even-keeled politics in which there's a kind of acceptance of a certain public philosophy to which most people subscribe and to view a country which was really on the precipice of polarization, I mean, I didn't recognize it at the time and I'm not even sure that in 1992 the phrase was in common usage in the United States, but certainly by 1994 with the advent of Newt Gingrich and the Republican takeover of the House, which I see actually as the dawn of a polarized politics in the United States. But as of the time that I was in Sweden, the rise of Bill Clinton looked fairly normal, in that he was a naturally-gifted politician. There's no question about that. I mean, whatever you thought about his private life and his morality is another thing, but he certainly was a gifted politician. I was able to, I think, explain him to the Swedes, although I'm not sure I entirely understood him myself. [laughter] [Editor's Note: Newt Gingrich is a Republican politician who represented Georgia's 6th District in the House of Representatives from 1979 to 1999. He served as the Speaker of the House from 1995 to 1999, during Bill Clinton's presidency.]

SI: Well, we are almost at five o'clock, so I was thinking we should end for today.

RB: Sure, sure.

SI: Let me just pause the recording.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

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