

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH FRANK R. LAUTENBERG

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

WORLD WAR II \* KOREAN WAR \* VIETNAM WAR \* COLD WAR

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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and

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NEWARK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

DOMINGO DUARTE

Shaun Illingworth: This begins an interview with Senator Frank R. Lautenberg on April 1, 2005, in Newark, New Jersey, with Shaun Illingworth ...

Sandra Holyoak: ... Sandra Stewart Holyoak ...

SI: Also in attendance is ...

Michael Fagan: ... Michael Fagan.

SH: Thank you, Michael. Senator Lautenberg, first of all, we would like to thank you for taking time today to speak with us. The first question that we always ask is where and when you were born?

FL: I was born in Paterson, New Jersey. I'm sorry that you're asking when, but I will tell you; it was 1924, on January the twenty-third. I am very pleased to have lived to be eighty-one years old and be as vigorous as I am. I've been blessed. I was born to a poor, working class family. My father worked in the silk mills of Paterson, as did his brother, as did his father, as much of the city of Paterson residents did. They had moved from Europe, whole communities almost of silk mill owners and silk mill workers. My father was on the workmen side. He was brought to this country at about five or six years of age. My mother was brought as an infant, a year old. They came to Ellis Island.

SH: Can you tell us where your father was from?

FL: My father was born in a city called Lodz in Poland, and my mother was born in a city called Minsk in Russia. They were not uncommon backgrounds for people who came to Paterson. They were silk workers. They're factory workers. While my father was not formally educated, he was an avid reader, and he had to leave school at the end of the sixth grade because his mother insisted that he was old enough to help the family, as was common at that time, so, he went to work. He learned the trade in the silk mills, but he continued to be interested in health, and literature, athletics. My father was not a man of big stature, but he was someone who took pride in his health and well-being; never smoked, rarely drank coffee, scolded my mother all the time for her smoking. My father lived to be forty-three; she smoked and lived to be eighty-three; that's one of those anomalies of life. But he was very interested in philosophy and he read the views of Mahatma Gandhi and Bernard McFadden, people who had particular philosophies about life. So, he went to work in the factory, grudgingly. He always felt that that was beneath his capability. One day, when I was twelve years old, my father took me to the factory that he worked in; ... it was a Saturday and I remember how annoyed I was because I really wanted to play baseball. ... So as we walked in the building, he said, "Do you feel the building shaking?" I said, "Yes, Daddy." He said, "It's dark in here, isn't it?" And I said, "Yes, Daddy." He said, "It's dirty in here," because the machinery was then all mechanical, it wasn't electronic as it is today, and as a consequence they had to oil the equipment and keep it going. ... He took my hand and he rubbed it across the silk fibers as they came off the spools and it left a film, and he said "You see that? That's dangerous to your health." He didn't know, certainly I didn't know, how prophetic that his statement was because, not too many years later, he came down with colon cancer and lived thirteen painful months, and his brother similarly; my father was forty-

three when he finally passed away. His brother was fifty-two and their father was fifty-six, all with cancer, and it was only those years later that I began to think about things. It didn't stop me from smoking for a lot of years, but I didn't realize that smoke was the dangerous thing that my father had recognized earlier. So, we struggled, they struggled to make a living. Their struggle included alternatives to working in the mills, because the mills were erratic in their operations in those days. My father always thought that he'd like to be a farmer, but he never could gather either the resources or the opportunity. He occasionally did go to work on farms in New York State and other places for short spells, and they just didn't materialize. So, they resorted to the ownership and management or functioning of a candy store, as they're commonly called. It was newspapers and lunch and coffee and that kind of thing. He would work typically from six in the morning until ten or eleven at night. He was immaculately clean about himself and his surroundings, so, he scrubbed and cleaned and always had a pleasant smile for people, but the physical requirement was so demanding that after a year, typically, he and my mother were exhausted from those hours and from that kind of work, being on their feet all the time, that we'd sell the store. He would sell the store, and we'd go to Grandma's house. My grandmother had a house in Paterson. Her husband, my grandfather, also died very young. He was thirty-seven when he died. He had come from Europe, and had been very successful in a very short time. ... He got into business and he had a coal delivering company, and he had investments enough that when he died, even though he died at age thirty-seven leaving five girls, there was a house that they owned, a two-family house, that produced some income. ... As a matter-of-fact, I think, probably three families could live there, because they had an attic apartment as well, ... enough that it became our refuge. So, every time we'd move, we'd stay where we were for a year, sometimes even less, and back to Grandma's house. The consequence of that is that I hold the record, though it's not in the Guinness record books, the fact is I went to thirteen schools in twelve years of public school, thirteen schools, and they ranged in communities from Elizabeth, New Jersey; Passaic Park, New Jersey; Clifton, New Jersey; Nutley, New Jersey; Belleville, New Jersey, all of these. It wasn't only that I would leave friends behind, before the alliances of friendships could get grounded, but sometimes I'd leave subjects behind, because one school would be at one level in the fifth grade, ... I'd go to another school, and they would have passed that by already. ... I did graduate in twelve years. I graduated from Nutley High School, after two years at Eastside High School and a year at Belleville High School. Maybe in their foresight, my folks knew that I was going to be a politician some day and I had to cover my bases early, but there it was. [laughter] Well, the kind of itinerant background that we had was dislocating in some ways, but I have had very strong leadership from my parents, very strong.

SH: You talked about the grandfather, who had fortuitously managed to provide for the family, but please expand a little bit on your mother's family background.

FL: Well, my mother was the only one of five sisters who didn't go to college. My mother graduated high school, went to a business secretarial school for a bit. Mother was the oldest of five girls and when my grandfather died; ... my mother ... came from a very strong, politically-involved, family; my grandmother being a leader among that group. It is suggested that during the Russian Revolution that my grandmother was hiding weapons under my mother's crib. ... I know that something rubbed off on my mother, because she never was discouraged. She was unhappy, but she always knew that she had assignments ahead of her. Her other sisters, her four sisters, all went to college. Two of them had advanced degrees, so, they came from a very

humble beginning, and moved along. My mother provided an inspiration for us as a family, particularly after my dad died. ... When I went to war, that family of four was reduced to a thirty-seven-year-old widow and my twelve-year-old sister; that was the family, from a family with a father and a son, reduced to two women. ... With that background that I had, with always living on the edge of poverty, I mean, there were so [many] specific incidents and the fact that it so contrasts with what happened to me in my later life. [it] is something that still astounds me, I must tell you. One time, I remember that I used to, occasionally, go with my grandmother to Atlantic City, where she rented a basement apartment; ... it was a very small unit, but we had a very strong relationship. So, I was maybe ten years old and my folks debated whether or not they had, or they could afford a three dollar round-trip ticket to Atlantic City or they had to buy two one-way [tickets], each way two dollars. ... They just could not put together the three bucks, so they bought the two dollar one-way, and my father then mailed me my ticket for my return home. I thought I had gone to heaven when I arrived in Atlantic City, and I was so taken by the beach, I've been lucky, that noise you just heard was me knocking wood, because I would go out at eight o'clock in the morning to the beach. ... I'd come back, as the sun came down, roasted to a crisp, and here you see that I'm still alive, and so I'll tell you what was right. What was right was the earth's atmosphere. It wasn't filled with toxic things, that I fight against [as Senator]. There weren't factors in the sky that robbed us of the ozone layer that protected us, but anyway. ... So, that was one side of things that I'll always remember, my joy at being able to be in Atlantic City, and aggravating my grandmother and an aunt and uncle, who lived down there as their permanent home. The other was on my thirteenth birthday; I was awakened by a disagreement taking place with my mother and my father, because my mother bought a bicycle for me with time payments. ... The time payments were a dollar a week, and my father was very angry; we couldn't afford. I heard the argument take place, and I never got to see the bike, which I wanted desperately to do. The tears were rolling down my face as my father persuaded my mother that the bike had to be taken back. We couldn't obligate ourselves like that, a dollar a week. So, that stuck in my mind. As a consequence, and I went through what lots of people have gone through who followed and preceded us in America, that is, my uncle bought me my first pair of long pants. I don't know, maybe, I was in the fifth grade, or something like that; knickers were popular in those days and that was my birthday present, from my great uncle. Treats were few and far between. ... If I tried to play sports in high school, there was no time because I was always working in the store. I don't remember meals together as a family, because when we had, when we were in store possession, somebody had to get up from the table, from one of the booths typically, and wait on the customer, and it was either me, at sixteen, or my little sister, at ten, and the relationship was that, so, it was amazingly disruptive on the functioning basis, but not on emotional basis. We were stuck together, no matter what, and I watched my mother take over leadership. One of the things that I remember so vividly about her is the pain that my sister and I used to go through because my mother would always have her hands in dishwater and they used to crack and bleed, and it was painful to witness. So, when I enlisted in the army, my father had died, my mother got a job at the Prudential Insurance Company, as a salesperson, and my sister and I were so elated at the fact that she was going to have a white collar job; no longer would her hands be immersed in dishwater. She had to have a car to service her territory, so we didn't have much money, and the only car we could find was an Oldsmobile convertible with a torn roof. So, we went out and we got something called oil cloth, if you remember, and we pinned it up and watched my mother drive off, after some driving lessons, to her territory, and we were so proud. ... What happened is she joined an office in

Passaic, an office of the Prudential Insurance Company. In those days, insurance agents were committed to collecting premiums, small premiums of twenty-five cents a week, fifty cents a week, a dollar a week, and that was her territory. Well, her income depended on her capacity to sell. My mother could sell, and at the end of three years, her manager came in, the war had ended, and the manager said to her, "Molly, I'm sorry to tell you, but Joe is back from the army and he wants his job back. He's going to get his job back." My mother said, and when I tell friends at the Prudential today, they shudder, my mother said, "Don't you have another territory for me?" He said to her, "Molly, you know we don't hire women for these jobs." Imagine that, they "don't hire women for these jobs," for what kind of job? It didn't require heavy lifting, or shoveling, or what have you. So, that was a big change. She then, and now by this time I'm out of the army, and we'll talk about the army in just a minute, my mother had to find something else to do. She bought another candy store, while I was going to Columbia University. She handled it herself. I used to come home weekends to try and help out. ... She accumulated a small reserve. She saw an ad one day, and I don't know whether you want to go into this, to this personal side of things, this is like my autobiography, that there was a dress shop for sale, and since my mother was brought up without money to buy clothes and things, she was never what you would call a smart dresser. So, she went down to see; she answered the ad, went to see this woman. ... We talked and she felt it would be a good thing, a good business for her. This was in Passaic, New Jersey. We lived in Clifton at that time, and, she put down a deposit, finally, \$2000.00; that's a lot of money for us. I came home from Columbia one day. I lived in New York, at school, but I would come home weekends, and she was sitting, sobbing bitterly. I said, "What's the matter." She said, "Frank, look at me. Do I look like someone who knows anything about fashion? I don't know how to dress myself properly." So, she said, "I can't go through with it." Well, I called the lady, the owner, who turned out to be a princess, and she said to me, "Look, tell your mother to come down and see me tomorrow. If she doesn't want it, I am going to give her deposit back. I don't want to take your mother's money." My mother went back. This woman talked her back into the store. My mother took over the store and, within months, she had people waiting outside to come in. She discounted everything, and she knew how to do it. My mother was a dynamic woman. After a few years, she met my stepfather and married him, and we were happy about that. She moved up to Boston, where he was a president of a small bank, had been for twenty-eight years; owned a house and had a reliable job, and my sister and I were happy. After about a year, he lost his job, after twenty-eight years. So, my mother, undaunted, bought another dress shop, in Massachusetts, which was much bigger, had another ten people working there. Before long, [customers] were waiting at the door to come in, standing at the door waiting to come in. They did very well there. Meanwhile, we step back, in what was happening to Frank, "Sonny," as they called me when I was a kid. I came out of the army. I served in Europe, and landed in England. ... First, I trained at Fort Monmouth, started in Camp Crowder, Missouri for basic training, where I learned that you cannot dig foxholes in the Ozark Mountains, no matter how sharp the pick; but you were not allowed to stop trying. I went into the army at Fort Dix, activated there, and I got on a troop train, after a few weeks of basic training, ... got on the train; we go to Camp Crowder, Missouri. This is the kid, who hadn't been outside the, say, New Jersey and New York City, and in my whole unit, no, several of us drew KP on the train. It's a troop train and, as we neared our destination, the mess sergeants, and I really, if I have a thing for a class of people, it's mess sergeants; mean, uncooperative, demanding, because all you could get was punishment. You never got praised, because these guys wished that they were doing other things, for the most part. Who wanted to fight for your

country, you know, with your hands in dishwater? So, they made sure theirs never went there. As we neared our destination, the sergeant in charge of my duty, when you go in you're a private. ... The sergeant in charge said, "Okay, let's start throwing things overboard, out." "What kind of things?" "These huge jars of pickles and ketchup and mustard and other things." So, I said, "Why are we doing this?" He said, "Do you know what happens if I get to the end of the ride and we have all these, stuff leftover? Do you know what I'll get the next time I have to go out on a troop trip?" "Well," I said, "that doesn't make sense." He says, "Shut up and keep throwing." Okay, I shut up, and I kept throwing. It was awful. I just couldn't see that kind of waste. Anyway, so I spent some weeks training in Camp Crowder, and I applied for Officers' Candidate School at Fort Monmouth, signal corps. I had an uncle, who was a colonel there, and he recommended that was a good thing to do. You were serving your country, at the same time providing some valuable services, as contrasted to simply being an infantry soldier, and, so, it sounded good to me. I went to Fort Monmouth. ... Fort Monmouth had several camps associated with it at that time, and I started to learn how to climb telephone poles and that kind of thing. ... I was a fairly fearless kid. When you move around as much as I did, and you had to make friends and make adjustments, you develop a veneer, let me tell you, so, it doesn't change heart, but does change skin. Anyway, I learned to climb the poles, and so forth; put in my application, I was supposed to go to OCS, Officers' Candidate School, and one day the company commander calls us together. We were then based at Sea Girt, that is now a [New Jersey] State Police Camp, was then a military camp. So, he told us that we would soon be shipping overseas. So, I said, "I'm here to go to Officers' Candidate School." He said, "Private, I'll tell you what, we'll send for you when we need you." So, I said, "Yes, but," he said, "Yes, but be ready to go." The funniest thing in that is the experience I had walking down the boardwalk one night; I met the love of my life, and I was what I called a foolish young man; I jumped the fence to go to see my girlfriend. ... I didn't know when we were shipping out precisely, but I knew we were going. ... There's a railroad station in Sea Girt, today. ... So, I went out to visit her, the family lived nearby, and I came back and the whole base was dark. I thought, "Oh, my God." So I jumped the fence, back over, ran into the barracks, turned on the lights, to see what had happened. I woke everybody up. I didn't [know]; I thought they were gone because the train was there parked on the siding. Anyway, we went overseas. Took a train to Boston, not to Boston precisely, maybe Taunton, Massachusetts, and there was a camp there, Myles Standish. So, we sailed from there on a huge ship called the *West Point*. It had been built as a luxury liner called the SS *America*, the last luxury liner to be built in the United States before the war. So, we boarded that ship and sailed alone. The speed of the *West Point* was such that it could outmaneuver just about any submarine, or anything like that, and we sailed across, made a five-day crossing with 15,000 soldiers aboard, where my unit drew KP. So, there we were, in the hold of the ship; now, it's one thing to have your arms in dishwater and you name it, but it's another thing to be rocking and rolling while you're doing that, and it was a very unpleasant experience. We stayed in England for a few months in preparation for transfer to France, which we did in convoy, took us three days and two nights to cross the Channel. The weather was bad, and the place was filled, they said, with enemy ships ... and a couple of ships were lost in that convoy from submarine attacks. We transferred to small craft, in very rough seas. Nobody's shooting at us.

SH: What year?

FL: The year was '44, and it was in the fall of the year, and the sea, the Channel is normally a treacherous body of water, but we transferred to small craft. ... We landed in a small town in France, southern France, not deep south, in, let's say, western France. We landed near La Havre, a big seaport town after being transferred, and nobody was shooting at us at the time; the combat had taken place and moved off there. We were bivouacked in mud fields; it was the rainy season, small tents, all kind of crude facilities, but you made do. It was a learning experience. I wound up with a twenty-man signal team responsible for the operation of switchboards, but principally the infrastructure of communications, telephone lines, either up on poles or, well, almost all on poles, and a radio communication. ... We got into a facility, on the way; got into boxcars and the messages on the boxcars were in French, "forty men eight horses," 'forty and eights' they called them, ... so they could hold either, again, eight horses or forty men, forty people, they were men, and a very slow journey, painfully slow. You can imagine the personal needs, and the facility and the whole business; all kinds of little adventures in between there, but our destination was Antwerp, Belgium. ... We got there at a moment in time when they had a very serious [problem]; Antwerp was attacked by unmanned weapons, unmanned bombs. One was a V-1 they called it, which was jet engine driven, mind you, jet engines. These were brand new things at that time. The other was a rocket engine, so, that was faster travel, traveled faster than sound. The V-1 would have enough fuel to carry it in the general target area, Antwerp. They wanted to take Antwerp in the worst way, and that's where the Belgian Bulge was about. It was to try and take the City of Antwerp, because the Germans wanted a port desperately on the West Coast. So, [that is] when we arrived there. A V-1, again, was a rocket engine. It had an erratic flight pattern. Once the fuel ran out, the thing would just drop to earth, but it didn't go straight down like a stone, you know, it would kind of do flips, and do other things, so you never knew quite where it's going to land. ... It was a very troubling kind of weapon because you heard it coming, ... sometimes you could see it, and you could hear the wings whistle as it fell to the ground. The other, the V-2, we're going back to 1944, think about it, sixty years ago, ... the Germans had the technology to deliver explosives by rocket; that's a missile, call it what you will, it is a missile, and it carried a fairly significant explosive warhead. So, if you were walking down the street and, suddenly, the block next to you, or a facility near you blew up; it was like a time bomb, not unlike the kind of car bombs that you see today being used in a place like Baghdad. So, we went to work everyday, down on the docks, which was part of the need for both, the Allies, and a target for the Germans. We were fortunate. I got knocked off a telephone pole one day. I was up there splicing wires, typically, or testing wire, and you had to do it; you wore these spikes as you know, strapped on your legs. ... The poles, typically, were thirty or thirty-five feet, in the ground about seven or eight feet, so you might be twenty feet in the air, or something like that, a little more. So, I was up there doing my job, and you carried a testing phone with you. ... You got the spikes set; you got a little junk around you. ... I heard the V-1, and it was a sound we were accustomed to. For several years after I came back to civilian life, when airplanes, jet planes were just beginning to fly, and if it was a foggy day, I would get edgy if you heard it through the fog. Anyway, so you continue, typically, to work through it, except when you see people on the ground starting to scatter. ... I'm up there twenty or twenty-five feet. Your body, figure maybe your feet are down, so it's twenty feet, and you're up there, and now, all of a sudden, I see soldiers running and everybody else. I say, "I better get the hell out of here." So, because I got kind of anxious, my telephone wire, the testing phone, got caught in my spike as I was trying to get down, and I couldn't quite manage, and, finally, this thing hit and blew with considerable force. You could see debris flying, and everything else, and I fell off the

pole; fell on my back on the dirt. At first, people thought I was hurt. It hurt, but it didn't last, and I was lucky because they checked me out to see if I had a serious injury; fortunately, it wasn't. But it scared the hell out of me. ... One day we went, we were at a drawbridge, and we used to ride in trucks like those that you see with the telephone company. They were enclosed, very hard riding, enough to give you a pretty good stomach upset. Sometimes I'd be hanging off the back throwing up, as did some other fellows, too, especially after you ate. We were waiting at a drawbridge to cross the river, and a bomb dropped on the other side of the road that we were headed for, and you go, "whew." Another day, we were splicing a cable, several of us, working in an area where the cable had been torn by a bomb. We were splicing this cable and it came time to go have lunch, so we went back to our mess hall. When we got back, there was a crowd gathered, a bomb had struck in the same place [we had been] a half hour earlier, just tore out this huge hole. We were living in a place, funniest thing is we were living in a mansion, in downtown Antwerp. I don't know, three or four story townhouse type, beautiful, but there was a hundred of us there, you know, sleeping on floors, on cots, and what have you. One day, we counted a 144 bomb drops in the city, 144; so if you take it over a twenty-four hour period, that's six every hour. It gets to be nerve-racking after a while, and then came the Battle of the Bulge. ... We were taken down to the railroad station, being given extra ammunition, and told that we were going to be sent to the battlefield. It had been a very cloudy, cold, snowy period and the Germans were beating the hell out of us. The Battle of the Bulge was famous. ... The Germans asked for a major surrender, and General McAuliffe was quoted as saying, "Nuts," and, fortunately, the next day after we got all set up to go down and join our colleagues, everybody was worried and scared, the sun came out. When the sun came out, the Air Force, it was the Army Air Force, it wasn't a separate air force, got into the sky. ... They pounded the German lines and turned the thing around, and it was just ... a matter of a day or two and they would have cracked our line, headed for Antwerp. So, we didn't have to go. We all breathed a sigh of relief, had another cognac, or something like that, or beer, probably. Also, when I was there, a theater was struck by one of these bombs. It was a Saturday afternoon, and *Buffalo Bill* was the movie, and a lot of people I know went to that movie. When the bomb hit, there were two theaters that connected, one around the corner from another, ... a couple of hundred people, they were killed and they were seated in their seats, ... covered over with white plaster, and dead from the concussion. ... Very recently, I got a letter, I was looking for it now, I couldn't put my hands on it, from someone I knew, who I had last seen in 1946 when we got out. I'll try to speed it up here a little bit.

SH: Please, let us continue. You got a letter from a gentleman that you had last seen in 1946 ...

FL: ... Sixty years ago, fifty-nine actually, who saw me on television, and he wrote the nicest letter and his name was Curt (Moline?). I called him. He said, "You remember me?" I said, "Yes, I remember you. Wasn't your name Curtis?" He said, "Yes, I've shortened it to Curt." Anyway, he had wonderful recall. I was not a good saver. I have very few souvenirs, almost no pictures. I got some old notes that I wrote to my mother, try to identify where I was without violating the security rules. You're not allowed to say where you were stationed, but I found a card, a postcard in Flemish; ... so I just sent it to her with a standard message because your mail was censored. ... My mother's closest friend, as a young woman, was a woman born in Holland, and they lived in the same neighborhood, Passaic, New Jersey, who were friends until they both died. So, she showed it to her, because Flemish and Dutch are very close languages, so, she read

it and then on that postcard I wrote to my mother that everything is okay with me, and that I wanted her to stay out of New York City, because I heard the Germans might bomb New York, coming from my bombing experience. She wept for three weeks, "Here's my son, he's there in a war zone, and he's writing me to protect myself." Anyway, the little mementos of time. When I got to New York, after we left France, we left France in August, we returned to France from Belgium, and we were shipping out to Japan, and the last thing I wanted to do was go to Japan. Fortunately, and I say this carefully now, I was in Europe when the Germans surrendered and it was a happy day.

-----END OF TAPE ONE, SIDE ONE-----

SI: This is side two of the first tape with Senator Frank R. Lautenberg. Please continue.

FL: When we were on the ship, the first A-bomb was dropped in Japan, and I wasn't, nobody was sorry that the bomb was dropped. We knew it saved thousands of American lives, and we didn't care about the loss of Japanese lives. Turned the boat around, and headed for New York. It was, really, we all cheered. The trip home was rough. It didn't matter. We were 3,000 aboard a small Liberty ship; you wouldn't dare go down in the hold because everybody was so sick, but it didn't matter. We got to New York Harbor. There were boatloads of pretty young women waving at us and cheering us home. I threw my sleeping bag over, threw it right into the harbor. I didn't ever want to see it again. I think I threw a few other things away. Many things were lost over the years, souvenirs that would have been nice to have; the jacket, the Ike jacket that they gave us, things like that. I even, somehow or other, lost my dog tags, I don't where. But, anyway, the letter from this Curt Moline was so detailed. He found the chateau that we lived in temporarily. Chateaus are palaces virtually. Again, you know, we slept on the floor, and things of that nature; we weren't by any means living it up. Reminded me about a little place they sent us for rest and rehabilitation along the Seine River, the whole unit. ... Then the opportunity came along, with the GI Bill, for me to go to the university. I went to Columbia. I spent six months at Seton Hall to catch up on some language credit that I have, had to have, and then went up to Columbia. ... That was a life changing experience. When I stood on the steps of the library, and General Eisenhower was the President of Columbia, and I got my diploma from General Eisenhower, seated in the audience were three of the most important people in my life, my grandmother, my mother, and my sister. ... The three women in my life who helped shape things and give me directions. That [and the] ability to get the education that I did; the fact that I had a chance to see another way of life; it wasn't so much the subjects that I learned, it was the horizons that I saw. When you're in the back of the store you don't see life that way. When I finished high school, I was seventeen years old, a very strong young man, and I got a job in a local dairy loading milk trucks; that's what I was prepared for, and I did very well there. Until the day I ran the hand truck off the edge of the platform and destroyed seven cases of milk; I think, I lost the job that day. But, I would have to go to work at four o'clock in the morning because they were worried about, you know, the milk turning. ... So, we'd get all the trucks out before the sun came up. ... That was, I call it the cocoon in which I lived; hard work, people struggling, people exhausting themselves. My father's sickness [was] thirteenth months of painful disintegration. When he died, my mother had bills. We didn't have Medicaid or any kind of health insurance. She owed the doctors, she owed hospitals, she owed pharmacies money; imagine [how] that piled up, after the grief of losing a forty-three year old husband,

father. So, this was a change in life that was, again, epic in proportion. Suddenly, I thought about things. I thought about careers. I went to work for the Prudential; my mother said they were a wonderful company, even though they fired her. She thought about the positive and not the negative ... the consequence of that. I went to work for the Prudential in the training program. I hated it. I did it for a year, and then a good friend of mine, someone I knew, not a good friend at all, someone I knew casually, from kind of the neighborhood, had an idea about processing payrolls for commercial companies, and I thought it was a brilliant idea. At the time, they had two employees, the two brothers; there were three part-time employees. While I was at the Prudential, I asked Henry and Joe Taub to permit me ... we met in the building. We were both housed in Paterson, an old hotel building, my office was there, their office was there, and so we'd see each other; we'd have coffee. ... I asked, to see if I could sell the product that I thought was a great idea. I felt like a missionary. So, I went out and, without any compensation, I sold clients, and it didn't take long before we had some significant boost in business. Then, I decided that I would switch; so, included in there was a time of, it's an adjustment. I said, "Okay, now, I'll continue to sell, but I want to be paid for it." Before you know it, was making more than the company was making, and I joined ADP in 1952. ... Today ADP has 45,000 employees and the longest growth rate of any company in America, at over ten percent each and every year; forty-two years in a row, each year ten percent more in earnings than the previous year. It's fantastic. I'm a member of the Hall of Fame of Information Processing, something established at Texas [Instrument]. It doesn't compare to Bill Bradley's Hall of Fame, or Larry Doby's Hall of Fame, but the fact is that I was recognized for some pioneering work in the field; establishing the legitimacy of outsourcing. That was the beginning. In 1961, we became a public company. I joined in 1952; 1961 we became a public company, the advent of the commercially viable computer took place ... with that. There was an IBM computer and with that, the business just began to grow rapidly, because we then had a more effective, rapid method to processing. Otherwise, we used to do it with typewriters and bookkeeping machines, and the crudest things, but we built this decent-sized business. We had almost 100 people by 1961 and we became a public company, and people who invested in the company have done very well. ... The company still functions. Again, it has its 45,000 employees and when the present CEO talks to the employees, it's immediately translated into ten languages, so, that shows you the scope of the business. It's a story about America, when I think about what happened. I decided, rightfully. I was thinking of public service. I had been a commissioner of the Port Authority, Governor Bryne appointed me there, and I really liked that. I was a chairman of one of the largest charities in the world and I like that. ... I decided in ... 1980 that I would try a hand at public service. I thought about running for governor in 1981, but I didn't think the company was prepared then, to just fill in the blanks and go ahead. A year later, I was convinced that we were and, at the end of 1981, I hired a young man who had been a senior aide to a candidate for governor in that year. ... He wanted to get out of politics. His guy lost in the primary and he said he wanted to get out of politics. He'd like a chance at a job in ADP. We had a law department, and he was a lawyer, and I felt I needed a personal assistant, so we hired him in August, and he said he was so glad to be out of politics. So, I said, "Well, okay, you come to work for me and you learn something about business leadership, etc.," because I was the CEO. ... One day, the then Senator Harrison Williams was beginning to falter. He had a problem with something called ABSCAM, if you remember. You can't remember, but you may have read about it, you're so young [to Shaun Illingworth]. But, not that you are, [to Sandra Holyoak] compared to me you're a kid; but, anyway, I decided that I would like to try my hand. I called

Mickey, who was this fellow, into my office. I said, "Mickey, I think I'd like to run for the senate." He said, "Oh, no. What do you want to do that for?" I said, "Mickey, let's find out a little bit more about it," and so he made some inquiries. I went down to see a judge, a friend of mine, who had been in politics before he was appointed judge, and I said to him that I was thinking about running for office, running for the United States Senate. ... He said to me, "I could think of nothing of more colossal disinterest in the State of New Jersey than the United States Senate." He said, "The only thing that counts here is governor." I said, "Come on." Anyway, so, we started to put together a team, and Mickey said to me, his name is Mickey Fagan, he is a lawyer and a very respected young guy, he said, "You know, what do you want to do this for?" I said, "Mickey, don't worry, we're not going to win." So, he said, "You know, but, maybe," you know. I said, "No, no." Entered into a primary that had eight, seven other people beside me, Democratic primary in 1982, and he said ... Let me know, Michael, when we're ...

MF: You have about five minutes left.

FL: I'll try to wrap up now. So, there were seven other people in the primary, and we were disparate group. The one next to me was a congressman, who in the final analysis was the most serious threat to my victory, who was a former congressman who had done a very good job. His name was Andy McGuire. There was a fellow, who said in interview he had on TV, the interviewer said to him, "What do you bring to, why do you want to do this?" He said, "Well, my area is foreign policy." He [the interviewer] said, "Where did you study that?" He said, "Well, I was a Marine guard at the Lisbon Embassy." So, "Thank you very much." Another guy said it would be the best paying job he ever had, and there were different reasons for doing this, so, I was lucky, because the size of the field made it much easier. I got twenty-six percent of the vote. McGuire was next to me; he got twenty-four percent; that's how close it was. The others dwindled down. Then I ran against Millicent Fenwick, who was the most popular candidate in the country. ... It was really a tough kind of thing, that I have to run against such an elegant person, and do what I did, which was to suggest that coming in as a freshman senator, she, at age seventy-two, would have a long way to go before she could be effective. Well, here I am, well past seventy-two, and I thought at the end of my third term, I thought, "I'd had enough. I want to do something different," so, I left the senate, standing upright, no threats to another election. But I decided it was time to go do something, some other business thing, and write the book that I'm still struggling with. ... I was out for two years, and then [Robert] Torricelli, who was then sitting senator and running for his first reelection, began to falter badly. ... The polls were very much against his winning; he was down twenty-two points. ... He decided to leave under considerable pressure. I got a call from the governor, after he had gone through several candidates who said, "No" to him. ... One of the things that have happened to me over the years, I have great respect for my fellow Democrats and the Democratic mission, but I always reserve the opportunity to make up my own mind and make my own decisions, so, that wasn't always in favor. ... After struggling to get other people to try to do this, the governor called me, Governor McGreevy. ... I decided that I would come back because, then, 9/11 happened. The country was on the edge of war, and recession was underway. ... I thought I could make a contribution, and it's one of the happiest things I did, because now, my fourth term, it puts me in a group of people that since the founding of the country has had only 162 people, or something like that, who served eighteen years. ... If things go along, and I complete this term, I will move into a class of a 130 people since the founding of this country. We're talking about billions of people,

that I'm still here. There's a courthouse here that carries my name. There's a railroad station that carries my name, and I'm proud of the service I gave; the public endorsed it, the people of New Jersey gave me a good-sized victory, something over eleven points, and so I'm back. I came back as a freshman [senator], I don't know whether it was return to a childhood, or something, but the fact is I'm there without the seniority that I had, which is my biggest regret. So, if we can leave it there.

SH: We'll conclude for now and reserve the right to come back for a follow up.

SI: Could I just ask one question, what unit were you in?

FL: Well, it was a signal unit. It's called the 3185th Signal Battalion, but we were assigned to the British Army, this twenty-one man team that I was on. I wound up a corporal, after roughly three years of service, and I did my duty, whatever I had to do. ... I was lucky, really lucky, because not only did I participate in the effort to free, to prevent Fascism from taking over, but also the benefits to me. That, this country has to remember, to turn this kid, who had no chance of a future, when I got that college education, as I said before, it wasn't the subjects; it was the horizon that it gave me, and that's what has to be remembered. If you give nutrition to a plant, it grows. If you give nutrition to a child, it grows. When you take a mind that can learn and you give it nutrition, by giving it an opportunity to learn, it grows. I went from the back of a store, to sitting at the desk that was occupied by Harry Truman before me. I still have the same desk.

SH: Thank you so much.

FL: Okay.

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Reviewed by Peter Asch 06/07/05

Reviewed by Sandra Stewart Holyoak 06/14/05

Reviewed by Frank R. Lautenberg 2/18/11