

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY
NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH GEORGE LEVINE
FOR THE
RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

MOLLY GRAHAM
and
IAN GRAYSON

ATLANTIC HIGHLANDS, NEW JERSEY

APRIL 12, 2016

TRANSCRIPT BY

JESSE BRADDELL

Molly Graham: This begins an oral history interview with George Levine. It is our second session. The interview is taking place on April 12, 2016 in Atlantic Highlands, New Jersey. The interviewers are Molly Graham and Ian Grayson. George, last time we left off with when you earned your Ph.D. in Minnesota and was offered a job at Indiana University. What was the position you had at Indiana?

George Levine: I was hired for the fall semester of 1959. I remember my interview on the campus was in the winter of 1959, early in the winter of '59. It was a time, that no contemporary student or young faculty can imagine, when getting a job was not a problem. [laughter] Everybody in my group of graduate students, I went to the University of Minnesota, got very good jobs. I was sort of disappointed. I only got five job offers, [laughter] and they were all from good places. I went to Indiana on the advice of my dissertation director, because Indiana had just begun publishing a journal in my special field, which was Victorian literature. I had an opportunity to join the journal, which I did immediately, even though when you got hired in those days or at least at Indiana, you weren't even an assistant professor. You were an instructor, but it wasn't going to be a problem. As an instructor, I began working on this journal, which has become the major, well, it was almost already then, but has become the major journal of its field in Victorian literature and culture. I began as a sort of apprentice, learning how to run academic journals with a group of wonderful people who really made my career. I mean, they still, they're starting to die off alas, but almost all of the group that hired me is still alive and we're still in touch. It was very important for my life. It was easy. [laughter] It's so hard for me to think about the life of a young assistant professor now, the young Ph.D. now, because I cruised into this really luscious job. I remember after two years, I said, "Oh, my God, I had better do something or I won't get promoted." I lived in a development outside of Bloomington if you could imagine what that is, and I walked around the development. I said, "I've got to do something. I've got to do something." I thought up an article, and I wrote it. I had it ready for when the review came in my third year, at which point I was promoted to assistant professor. Because of all the stuff I was learning at the journal, I really had a pretty easy time developing a research program, and so right from the start of my career, I very luckily could combine my teaching with my research. I just flew in on the right wave. [laughter] It was very lucky. I got promoted, just imagine this, I got promoted to associate professor with tenure without having a book. I was in the process of writing the book, and the book came out very shortly after my promotion. It was just a better time to be on a campus. You have a Ph.D., yes?

MG: No.

GL: No?

MG: No, a master's in library science and a background in radio documentary.

GL: Oh, I see, I see, yeah.

MG: I am just an adjunct teacher, but my full-time job is oral historian at the University.

GL: Yeah, well, that's a great and very smart thing to do actually, because I imagine it's pretty interesting too, yeah.

MG: Yes. I have thought about getting a Ph.D., but I kind of already have the job I would want.

GL: Yeah, don't worry about it. [laughter] I've, for many years, certainly as long as I was at Indiana and the job market was still good, I discouraged students from rushing into publication. I thought, "There's enough garbage out there already. Think it through, work it out, and do it." It took me a while to understand and it didn't happen until after I came to Rutgers actually that nobody could get a good job now without doing stuff that I actually didn't even approve of. [laughter] My career at Indiana was super. Bloomington is a lovely place, and it's a great university. The problem was actually from my wife because unless you were right in the heart of academia and you thrive there, you were in, should I say, the sticks. She didn't want to be an academic wife. She had her own talents and energies. In fact, it tended to be the case when I went there that the really happy people on the faculty at Bloomington all had partners and the unhappy ones who wanted to get out were bachelors. There weren't many women at that point either. It was absolutely perfect for me. I had a sabbatical year from Indiana, and my wife always talked about it as, well, "How long were you in Bloomington?" they would say. She would say, "Nine years with one year off for good behavior." We went to London and lived in London. [I] did some research there. There in London, too, and in England, the fact that I was on the journal was really incredibly useful. I immediately made contact with all sorts of really interesting people and had access to libraries and advice about what I needed. My career at Indiana was an extremely happy and lucky one, but then, how can I put this, I got too good. No, not too good, that's the wrong word, [laughter] but I got too successful. In [1968], there were a deluge of job offers. I visited the University of Chicago. They wanted to hire me, and that made me pop my buttons. I thought, "Wow." The University of Toronto, and there's a whole bunch. Minnesota wanted me back. I was very left wing, and those were the days [of] the late '60s. One of the things I could do when I was teaching there, the department gave me a ton of money to direct a seminar, to which I could invite any of the most famous people that I knew of. I invited Dick Poirier. You don't know who Dick Poirier is. Well, Dick Poirier was one of the most important critics certainly of his time. He was one of the most important critics in the country, and he was the person who put the English department at Rutgers on the map. [Editor's Note: Richard Poirier served as an English professor at Rutgers for over fifty years and founded the literary journal *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*.] He brought in all kinds of people. I guess it must have been in the early '60s he did that. I invited Dick to come to my seminar. I remember this quite vividly. People in the department asked me to ask him if he would consider becoming the chairman of the Indiana department, because our former chairman, I can't remember what happened, he left for some reason. Anyway, it doesn't matter. I was walking with Dick, and I said, "Dick, people would like to know, would you be willing to come be chairman of our department?" He immediately said, "No, but would you like to come to Rutgers and be chairman of the new English department at Livingston?" That was a shock. I didn't know what I wanted to do, because I loved Indiana and I was getting offers, as I said, from Chicago, which is not a place to sneeze at, and Toronto, where I had some really good friends, Minnesota, which was my alma mater. I said, "Well, I'll think about it." That's when I first found out about Livingston [College]. I went to visit Chicago. I talked with the people from Toronto. I said no to Minnesota. It's too cold. I really didn't know. I'm not good at making up my mind. I really didn't know. What swayed me, I have to admit, and this might have been true for other serious faculty that Ernie Lynton hired. Lynton, of course, was, you know who he was, the dean. My

heart was in the '60s revolution, and I was active on the Indiana campus with various uprisings. There was never any major thing, but there was an occupation of the central mall by students, which I supported along with lots of faculty. The mission of Livingston, as I understood it from Ernie Lynton and from the documents that were available and from what Dick said, was such that I thought, "This is where my heart is. I know if I go to Chicago, I'm going to have super students and they'll all be bright enough so that they don't even need me, whereas at Rutgers, the State University, there's going to be a mixed bag and that's where the harder teaching happens." I have to admit that I probably wouldn't have done it if Dick hadn't assured me that if that the Livingston experiment doesn't work, if things go bad, I was always welcome in the graduate program. In fact, I was told that I could begin teaching in the graduate program immediately. Finally, I decided at the last minute. I told Marge, my wife, "Tonight, I'm going to decide." At midnight, I called up Dick and told him, "Yes, I'm going to come to Livingston College." The next morning, there was a basket of roses on my front steps. [laughter] Dick was that kind of guy, and he sent me those roses. That was how I got to Livingston.

MG: There are a few things I want to go back to before we get into Livingston.

GL: Sure, yeah.

MG: What was the name of the journal you worked on at Indiana?

GL: *Victorian Studies*.

MG: Does it still have that name?

GL: Yeah, yeah, and I still get every issue.

MG: What was your role? Were you in editing, submitting articles?

GL: It was interesting. They put me through a kind of routine. They would send me to the library and [I would] look up articles to find the best people for reviews, because it was still [new]. The journal was founded in 1956. I think it was '56, yeah. It was still finding its way, and it had made a mark. As I said, my dissertation director knew about it and thought it would be a very good thing for me, but they needed a lot of basic groundwork. I would do library stuff. I would help with the book reviews, and I would read all the manuscripts that came in. They gradually got me to write the rejection letters, which is not a lot of fun. They got me into the process, so I would help in the proofreading. For me, it was really very exciting, and it was my basic education in academic publishing and in what a discipline is like. The friends I made then, down deep into old age, they're still there. I worked my way through. At some point, I don't know where I was on the masthead, but at some point, I became [a co-editor]. There was no single editor. There were three guys, Phil Appleman, who still lives in New York, Michael Wolff, who still lives in Amherst, and Bill Madden, who did die. Then, it was Appleman, Madden, Wolff, Levine. I don't know exactly what year, but I became one of the co-editors of the journal. There was at least one year when I was the sole editor, because everybody was doing something else in some way or other. I shouldn't say the sole editor but the primary editor, because there wasn't anybody [laughter] else there to do stuff. Throughout my career,

I've been introduced as one of the founding editors of *Victorian Studies*, and I always have to disabuse people. I wasn't there right at the start. I missed it by two years, but everybody still thinks, except now you, everybody still thinks that I was one of the founding editors. The founding editors were my friends. The guy who was the book review editor, Don Gray, I'm still in almost daily contact with him. He still lives in Indiana. Actually, he's the last of the people who stayed in Indiana.

MG: What was the book you were working on then?

GL: Well, I wrote my dissertation on George Eliot. [Editor's Note: Born Mary Ann Evans, the widely respected and unconventional Victorian-era writer George Eliot is best known for her works *Adam Bede*, *The Mill on the Floss*, *Silas Marner*, and *Middlemarch*.] My dissertation director, who was very good, said, "Well, George, I don't really think this is a book. What you should do is mine it for articles." I did publish, very successfully and luckily, two chapters as separate essays, but I needed to get a book and it wasn't going to be on George Eliot. I don't know how much interest the details of this academic study is, but I was fascinated because of my dissertation director, who was a great teacher, I was fascinated by the Victorian writers who weren't novelists but prose writers, philosophers, theorists and so on. I began working on Thomas Carlyle, who I realized was one of the central figures in the development of what we think of as Victorian culture. I was always interested in novels as well. Somehow, I began to work out a dissertation which dealt with Carlyle and some other writers, it turned out to be Macaulay, about whom nobody writes anymore, and Newman, and I read their prose in relation to fiction. The book was called *The Boundaries of Fiction*. [Editor's Note: Dr. Levine's book *The Boundaries of Fiction* was published in 1968.] It was all about non-fiction. This is just a sideline, but my career was very successful because I had all that time that people these days don't have. I sent the manuscript, well, Johns Hopkins Press, I remember this all too painfully, Johns Hopkins Press expressed real interest in the book. When I finished it, I sent it to Johns Hopkins Press. I figured, "Well, if they're so interested in it, they're going to publish it, right?" One day, I get in the mail the manuscript, because then [there was] no digital stuff, it was really a manuscript. I get the manuscript back, "Sorry, can't publish it." Somebody nixed it. It was a very nasty nix, as I recall. I wonder if I still have that. I probably burned it. I was so shocked and so upset that I knew I couldn't redo it. Instead of even trying to revise, I stuck it in an envelope and sent it to Princeton Press, which is better than Johns Hopkins Press, and they took it. My career was set. It was after that, of course, that the offers from other universities came in. That was what I did. The non-fiction interest coincided with my then quite strong 1960s political leanings. Everything worked. [laughter] I was really lucky. Going to Livingston solved my political conscience and guaranteed me that whatever else happened I could keep doing my research, which I really loved as well. By that time, I was practically established because [of] the connections that the journal had helped me develop and then the success of the book. I was in good shape. I came to Livingston bright-eyed. What's the phrase?

MG: Bushy-tailed.

GL: [laughter] Yeah, bright-eyed and bushy-tailed, thinking that I was going to save the world and also publish on Victorian literature. [laughter] It was a very exciting moment. Ernie Lynton and his wife Carla, they were very elegant people. It surprised me [that] they lived in

Princeton, even though they were building this new place. Ernie had all the right ideas, but he was a man of real elegance. When you visited the Lynton's, it was really elegant. [It was] not like Bloomington, Indiana, between Ernie and elegant Princeton and Dick Poirier, who was in the heart of intellectual culture in New York. He was then an editor of *Partisan Review*. He later founded *Raritan*. You don't know *Raritan* either. *Raritan* is the journal that's still published out of Rutgers. It's a really super-intellectual journal that Dick founded and made in his own image. Then, when he retired, he gave it to Jackson Lears, whom you must know. [Editor's Note: Rutgers history professor Jackson Lears is the editor-in-chief of the literary journal *Raritan: A Quarterly Review*.]

MG: I do not.

GL: Really?

MG: This is not a world I am too familiar with.

GL: Oh, but Jackson is in the history department. Do you know [him]?

Ian Grayson: I am afraid I do not.

GL: I assume he's still teaching. He's very active. He's the editor now. Dick anointed him, and he'd done a really good job. I think he's one of the most famous people in the department.

MG: His name sounds familiar. We are very isolated in the Oral History Archives.

GL: I see, I see, okay. I'm sure he does American history.

IG: Well, I did not take my main American history courses at Rutgers since I transferred.

GL: Oh, yes, of course. Anyway, the journal *Raritan* is an inheritance from Dick, instead of taking it with him when he retired. In fact, he wanted to retire, so he found Jackson, and Jackson has been running it with great success. He's a really smart guy, nice guy.

MG: In what ways were you active in the social and political movements of the time?

GL: Well, at Indiana, some of the faculty formed a group of self-important thinkers about cultural issues and kept intervening in campus activities and supported student movements. I wasn't a big shot director of things. My personality is not revolutionary actually, [laughter] but I was engaged as much as I could be. When there were demonstrations, I always demonstrated and all that sort of stuff. When I got here at Rutgers, there was a big uprising that you must know about. The president [Mason Gross], what a smart man, what was his name? There's a monument to him in the quad near the history department; there is a plaque and a bust. My name memory is shot. There was the vice president, whose name I remember, Dick Schlatter, and the president, who managed to handle the uprising brilliantly, absolutely brilliantly. Both of these guys were also on the left, so it helped in the movement. When I came, the first year I was on campus [was] in 1968-'69. Livingston opened in '69, so, [in] 1968, I was here the year before

preparing. During '68, there was a sit-in at the administration offices. He handled it brilliantly. All the faculty, as far as I remember, really respected him, that he managed to do what a lot of campuses as you know didn't handle well at all. There was a kind of peace between the students and the administration. Schlatter, I don't know why I remember the vice president Schlatter more than I remember the name of the president, but they were people with whom I and Poirier, who was probably the most important faculty member in the humanities, we all sort of, I wouldn't say hung out together, but there was a kind of sense of community and connection that was really very, very good. [Editor's Note: Mason W. Gross served as the president of Rutgers University from 1959 to 1971. Richard "Dick" Schlatter taught history at Rutgers beginning in 1946. Schlatter served as provost and vice president from 1962 to 1971 and returned to the history faculty until his retirement in 1982. The uprising that Dr. Levine is referring to occurred on February 24, 1969, when members of the Black Organization of Students (BOS) took over Conklin Hall at Rutgers-Newark to protest the underrepresentation of minorities at Rutgers. President Gross negotiated a peaceful conclusion to the seventy-two-hour building takeover, and Rutgers University enacted programs and policies to promote pluralism and equity. In 1994, the Class of 1968 dedicated the Mason Gross Memorial on Voorhees Mall as a twenty-fifth year reunion gift to the University.]

MG: Not Mason Gross?

GL: Mason Gross. [laughter] Yes, Mason Gross, thank you. There's a whole school named after him. He was an amazing man, really amazing.

MG: I wanted to ask if any students at Indiana sort of stood out to you. Did any have careers that you followed?

GL: Well, a few. I was there nine years, but I actually became a serious graduate teacher only in the last three or four years. I didn't actually have a lot of students who went on. I did teach people who had very good careers, but, no, there were no superstars. I didn't direct any dissertations at Indiana that produced big stars, but there were a lot of very good students who did very well. In those days, in the mid-'60s, from the mid-'50s to about 1968 or '69, the market was just wide open. Every university was expanding, hiring, so there was never any problem if a student was any good, went on and got a good job, and that was that. That's the way it should be. No, there wasn't anybody. I still have a few friends left from those days.

MG: I am curious about the student body, too. You would leave Indiana for Livingston, which had a lot of minority students, and I was curious if there were a lot of women students because of Vietnam.

GL: There were a lot of women students, but I don't know that it was an imbalance. Do you mean at Livingston?

MG: In Indiana.

GL: Oh, in Indiana. I can't even remember. There was nothing striking. I can tell you about the faculty balance, but I can't tell you about the student balance. There were plenty of women

students. I've never really thought about that. No, my sense is that it was just what I would've taken to be a normal balance of male and female undergraduates. The difference was all at the higher levels. When I went to Indiana, which was a very big department, there were, among the faculty, I'm just trying to figure out at the start, maybe three women. I don't know whether this should be published. [laughter] Indiana's English department was really very democratically run, and it wasn't long before I was on what they call the executive committee, even though I was still wet behind the ears. Each year, we would go out searching for faculty, and we would review the applications and interview. I recall all too vividly, this must have been around '65 or so, when a woman looked like a very serious candidate, the group would on the whole say, "Well, yeah, she looks pretty bright, but you know she's just going to have a baby, and it'd be better to hire the guy." It really is the way it was. With all my left-oriented politics, I didn't register at that time what an awful thing this was. That's the way you do it, right? I mean, she's just going to get pregnant and then what? I'm sure the whole country worked [this way]. We gradually got, by the time [of] the consciousness-raising of the '60s, we gradually got aware of what was going on, and we began hiring really good women in the following years, '67-'68, some of whom I'm still friends with. If they knew what I did in 1965, they wouldn't talk to me. As teachers, I don't think any of us discriminated against women, but we probably did. You read about the culture and you recognize most of the time acts like this are very unselfconscious. You're not thinking, "Oh, I'm undervaluing her because she's a woman." I really don't remember ever feeling or doing that. In fact, some of my best students were women, but that sounds like some of my best friends were Jews. [laughter] I don't exonerate myself from the pre-feminist change, but it certainly happened by the late '60s and early '70s that the texture changed. In hiring, this is something also that would be interesting to people who grew up in a different culture, it really was the old-boy network. If somebody you knew at another university said, "My student is really super. Why don't you?" whoever that person recommended would get not necessarily hired but would certainly have a step up in the hiring process. Even when I started at Livingston, I started in '68 when there was no Livingston, it was very common for universities to send people around to good graduate programs to try to find potential hires. I did that for two years. I remember people from other universities coming to look at us, but the whole thing cracked. I think [in] the early '70s, the job market just collapsed, and it's never been good since. It was just a totally different culture. When the feminists were talking about the old-boy culture, they were talking about something real. People who participated in it didn't think they were doing anything wrong. Of course, this person whom you trust has a student who he says is exceptional, why shouldn't I just hire that person? That pretty much stopped I think in the early '70s when the market collapsed and some of the energies from the 1960s seeped into the university.

MG: It seemed like Livingston was a great way to address some of these things.

GL: Yeah, absolutely. I thought we were saving the world, making it better in all kinds of ways. The pre-opening year was a year of real excitement. We were all thinking, "What can we do to make this work?" This is something if you haven't looked into it you should. I understood that the original conception of Livingston was not at all what it became, that it was to be a kind of experimental college for high-powered students and not a college with a primary orientation to helping minority students, first-generation students. All the events of the 1960s changed the planning, so that by the time they offered me a job, it was a mix of, "We're going to bring in

really high-powered students with great imaginations and experiment with teaching, and at the same time, we're going to open the doors to first-generation students and to minorities and so on." What a utopian vision it was. In fact, the first class in 1969 was exactly that. There were some really super, in the old-fashioned sense, some really super students, also coming to save the world and really eager for a pedagogical experiment, and there were the kids who didn't know what a university was. Nobody in their family had ever come close. It was a very mixed bag. What we, in innocence, didn't realize is they don't mix. You can't do one and the other. It's one of the reasons that Livingston in my estimation didn't work as [intended]. We didn't know enough and we really thought if we just opened things up and gave the students as much head as possible, the black kid who had barely made it through high school and the white kid who was a superstar in a Long Island private school could somehow work it out. Of course, as you know, they didn't. [laughter] I think Livingston helped produce a lot of very bad racial feeling, because the black kids didn't trust the white kids, and the white kids couldn't figure out why the black kids wouldn't play with them. At communal eating places, there would be black tables and there would be white tables, and the distrust was awful. There were a lot of very sad white kids, really well intentioned, very bright, who just didn't know what to make of it. That was the Livingston crisis, but when I came in, I thought, "Why not? Why couldn't you do this? It's a very exciting idea." There were lots of things nobody, the administration, the people who organized dorms, everybody, nobody really knew what the problems would be.

MG: I am curious about the genesis of Livingston. Whose idea was it first?

GL: Well, you really need to talk to somebody else, because I was somebody they chose thinking that they could take a well-known white researcher and put him in a context where he was going to be able to educate kids from the ghetto. It's not that that couldn't happen, but all of us needed to know a lot more. I was chosen when the alteration in plans had already happened. I don't know how you would find out more about Ernie Lynton. Have you found anybody? Because he was absolutely key. He was a really good man. He was very serious, and he really thought it could work. He was way too elegant. He thought like me, he thought, "Why not? We're smart? We know how to teach. We know what's good. Why can't we just work this out?" He went after very high-powered faculty, and he got a bunch. I don't know that I was high powered at the time, but I was successful. He got one of my best friends from Livingston, who was much smarter than I am, and he's still one of my very best friends. He hired a guy named Bob Krauss, who was chair of the psychology department. He had taught at Harvard. He had taught at Columbia. He went back to Columbia very shortly, because he was much smarter than I and he knew that it wasn't working. [Lynton recruited] people like that. There were some great people in anthropology. [Editor's Note: Robert Krauss served as the chairman of the Department of Psychology at Livingston College from 1968 to 1970.]

MG: Yes, Robin Fox. [Editor's Note: In 1967, Robin Fox founded the Department of Anthropology at Livingston College. Lionel Tiger joined the faculty at Livingston College in 1969 as an anthropology professor.]

GL: Well, there was Robin Fox. There was Lionel Tiger, but there was also a guy named Roy D'Andrade, who very quickly, after a year or two, realized, like my friend Bob, that it's not going to work. A lot of the people he hired first off left, but they were faculty who would've

done fine anywhere in the normal university context and that was what Ernie was after. I really don't know whether Ernie was the initiator of the Livingston conception. I know he was in from very early on and while he was in the planning stage that the transformation from this elite experimental college to this open democratic college took place, so he was obviously in on that. I don't know who started it. It might have been Mason Gross. He obviously had to have something important to do with it. If you're doing a history, I don't know if there's anybody left who could tell you, but it would be very interesting to find out. Presumably Mason Gross, but Mason is dead and Ernie is dead. Warren, Ernie's henchman, henchman is not a fair word, [laughter] but the guy who was most important, the vice president or whatever, [was] a guy named Warren Carrier. [Editor's Note: After Rutgers acquired 540 acres of Camp Kilmer in Piscataway in 1964, President Mason Gross and the Board of Governors began planning for the building of three college on the tract of land. In March 1965, the Board of Governors appointed physics professor Ernest Lynton as dean of the first and, as it turns out, only college to come to fruition. Lynton and G. Reginald Bishop, the associate dean of the College of Arts and Sciences (which by 1967 would be called Rutgers College), proposed a residential college that would function autonomously within the Rutgers-New Brunswick federated college system. Lynton envisioned an innovative, experimental college dedicated to the teaching of the social sciences. In November 1965, Lynton and the planning committee visited the University of California-Santa Cruz, the University of California-Irvine and Claremont College and drew upon aspects of the architecture and academics of those schools to incorporate into their future institution. By 1969, after race riots across the nation and demonstrations at Rutgers protesting racial inequalities, the planners expanded the new college's mission to emphasize diversity and began to recruit and enroll minority students and faculty members. In the fall of 1969, Livingston College opened as Rutgers-New Brunswick's first coeducational residential college. (From Paul Clemens and Carla Yanni, "The Early Years of Livingston College, 1964-1973," from *The Journal of the Rutgers University Libraries*; "Livingston College: An Early History" in Inventory to the Records of the Office of the Dean of Livingston College, Ernest A. Lynton, 1965-1973, Special Collections and University Archives, Rutgers University Libraries)]

MG: Yes.

GL: You know about Warren. Is he still alive? I don't know anything about him. [Editor's Note: In 1968-1969, Warren Carrier served as associate dean, professor of English and comparative literature and chair of comparative literature at Livingston College. In 1969, Carrier became a dean at San Diego State University.]

MG: I have to check, but I know that he was in the English department.

GL: I think he was in either English or comp lit. He and Ernie were the people I dealt with when I first arrived, and he would know, if he's still alive. I don't know whether he's still alive. I haven't been in touch with him in forty years, something like that, thirty-five years, but I don't know who else would know. Almost all the primary suspects in this that I know of are dead. Ernie is dead. Dick Schlatter is dead. The names will come back to me tomorrow morning or something if I think of them. To know how this all got started and what caused the transformation in conception, you need to talk to people before me, which is hard to imagine, but

there were people before me. There may be people in the history department who know. I don't know where else to look.

MG: That is okay, and I am interested in what you know anyway.

GL: That's all I know about that.

MG: Do you know how it was decided to call the college Livingston College?

GL: No, I do not. He was governor. That's all I know. I don't know why. Was he a good governor? [Editor's Note: Livingston College is named after William Livingston, who served as a delegate at the Constitutional Convention and the first governor of New Jersey. Livingston earned a living as lawyer and represented the legal interests of his brothers, Philip and Robert, original trustees of Queen's College who were also merchants and landowners with ties to the slave trade. This topic is discussed in the first volume of *Scarlet and Black: Slavery and Dispossession in Rutgers History*, edited by Marisa J. Fuentes and Deborah Gray White (2016).]

MG: I do not know but I did do some research into how he made his money, and it was from the slave trade.

GL: This happens all the time. Well, you know. You've been reading. I'm sure you follow this stuff. The Woodrow Wilson School down at Princeton, for instance, is having all this trouble because Woodrow Wilson was, I didn't know this, but Woodrow Wilson was a first-class racist, really awful. They're having trouble at Harvard. There's a famous name in the history of the country or certainly New Jersey. Was he the first governor, Livingston? I think he might have been the first governor, so you name the college after him. It's very important that it have a New Jersey [namesake]. I'm sure that that played an important role, to have a kind of New Jersey base. My guess is that they probably chose the first governor. I should look that up whether Livingston was. I never bothered about it. I knew that he was a governor, and so you don't think about the names. I would have happily, if I were a political scientist, if somebody wanted me at the Woodrow Wilson School, I would've gone in a flash. Woodrow Wilson, famous man, you know, League of Nations, sure. Is it well known that he was a racist, Livingston? Because I don't know about this. [Editor's Note: Born in Virginia, Woodrow Wilson graduated from Princeton University in 1879 and became a professor of politics and jurisprudence there in 1890. Wilson held the post of president of Princeton from 1902 to 1910, before becoming governor of New Jersey. Wilson served as the U.S. president from 1913 to 1921, during which time America fought in World War I. Attempting to lead the peacemaking process after the war, Wilson conceived of the Fourteen Points and the League of Nations, an intergovernmental organization that the United States never joined. The Woodrow Wilson School of Public and International Affairs at Princeton is named for him.]

MG: I do not know about his feelings, but I know that is how his family made their money.

GL: Look what happened to Jefferson's reputation as a result. If this got into the newspapers, somebody would be campaigning to change the name of Livingston College. Everybody back then was a slaveholder. Wilson really disappointed me, because I went through my innocent life

thinking that Wilson, with all his problems, that he was on the right side and then to see that he was specifically in action a racist, wow, that was a shock. No, I don't know, and I'm sure that nobody who chose the name Livingston knew or thought about it for a second. If we had known, [laughter] it's odd with all our runnings around, if we had known in the 1970s that Livingston was a slave owner, the name of the college would've been changed immediately. There would've been sit-ins and all kinds of stuff.

MG: I am curious why Livingston College was referred to as an experiment. What was experimental about it?

GL: Well, one of the things that interested me about coming was not only that I could teach in the graduate program in a relatively conventional way, but one of the things about the journal, *Victorian Studies*, that made it very important at the start is that it was interdisciplinary. I grew up in a literary culture [that] was distinctly not interdisciplinary, and the interesting people I knew were deeply dissatisfied with a narrow sense of literature and understood that in order to really come to terms with literature, you had to come to terms with social, political, economic issues and so on. That orientation is part of what attracted me to Livingston, because it was imagining itself as a very interdisciplinary institution. I could run an English department, in which, for instance, there wouldn't be film studies and English studies. There would be Film-English Studies, and I could actually have the film program inside the department. We would joint teach with people in history or economics or whatever. The experimentalism was partly a push towards interdisciplinarity, but it was also a resistance to the traditional format of teaching, where I stand up here and everybody else sits here and they listen to me. In fact, it used to drive me crazy, but you couldn't hold a class unless you put the kids in a circle. It's a democratic geography for the classroom. I learned the stupidity of this very quickly; I wanted to give the kids primary responsibility for deciding, within the rubric of whatever the course was, what we would be looking at, what we'd be reading. The first day, we began to talk about what to read. I said, "Holy cow, how could I ask them? They have no idea."

MG: What the options are.

GL: They don't know what the options are. Then, you start to narrow it down. You say, "Well, the option is a, b, c, and d." They don't know, and you have a responsibility as a teacher to impose some stuff or what's the point? There were different varieties of open teaching that we all wanted to do. Of course, we were very intense on crossing racial lines, which broke down almost immediately, so the experiment became having sexually and racially disparate classes.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

GL: We found ourselves experimenting by having classes that were all black, classes that were all women. We didn't know what the hell we were doing basically. That's not fair, but it was very disillusioning and I think a lot of us became very disappointed with ourselves because we jumped into this without really understanding what all the problems were.

MG: I am curious about your personal transition back to New Jersey. I think you had started your family in Indiana. Where did you settle when you came here?

GL: Well, that was also interesting because my last year at Indiana was actually very satisfying although turbulent because the University of California, they didn't offer me a job but they asked me to teach in the summer school. I had this wonderful moment. Nobody ever has a moment like this. In July of 1968, I was getting paid by Rutgers, California and Indiana, three different paychecks. [laughter] That was fun. When we left Indiana, we didn't have time to shop around for a place at Rutgers. Ernie Lynton found us a place to rent in Princeton of all places. What I did was I had my stuff shipped to Princeton. I drove to California, and I taught in California, a wonderful summer, even though it was '68, when there were curfews because of violence in Berkeley. I took my kids to Disneyland [laughter] and then drove back and settled into Princeton, which I've never liked. It's very cozy, but I really felt like, "I'm teaching at Rutgers and I'm committed to the education of minority students and here I am living in Princeton, which still [had] a quasi-slave culture and it's very pretty and it has nothing to do with my life." We lived there. It was amazing. We lived in an area where there were a few black kids who went to school, and the only kids that my kids ended up playing with were the black kids. Some of the people in the neighborhood didn't like that, and one of them came when I was away and sort of made menacing anti-Semitic remarks to my wife. It just felt like, "What the hell am I doing in this place?" During that year, that's where we had to live. I hated the commute, because you put in a full day at Livingston, it was a lot of emotional stress, and you drive back that thirty miles. I'd fall asleep. It was not good. We moved to Highland Park, which you know where Highland Park is.

MG: Yes, I live there.

GL: You live there. Where do you live?

MG: We have a little house on Montgomery Street between Second and Third.

GL: Oh, yeah, well, I lived on Lincoln Avenue.

MG: Yes.

GL: I lived about two blocks from you. [laughter] It was cozy. It wasn't quite as Jewish as it has become. There was no yeshiva there, but it was much cozier. It reminded me a little bit of the Bronx, where I grew up, and I liked the fact that it was five minutes to the University. The one thing I never managed to do comfortably because I'm not that good a bike rider, I would like to bicycle to school and I used to do that, but I'd always get scared at the traffic around the bridge. [Editor's Note: The interviewer Molly Graham nods her head in agreement.] Yeah, still. I stopped. I drove most of the time, unless I had time to walk. Moving there was much happier for my wife too because it was not Bloomington, Indiana. You could get into New York in an hour, and we did a lot of that. My kids grew up [in Highland Park]. Well, my daughter was seven when we moved to Highland Park, so her early adolescence, from then on, she was a Highland Parker. My son was a year-and-a-half older. They went to Highland Park High School. Then, my son became disaffected. He went to an early college called Simon's Rock, which still exists, up in Massachusetts, where you get your first year of college at the same time you are doing your senior year in high school. We became veterans of that area. I lived in

Highland Park for thirty-eight years. It was cozy. I wasn't wild about Highland Park, but it was fine.

MG: I am curious about that year of planning, you came in 1968, a year before the school opened, and the kinds of conversation you would have and who else was involved.

GL: Let me see if I can reconstruct some of that. I mean, the noisiest, I don't mean this negatively, but the noisiest people were Gerry Pomper in political science. Well, there was my friend Bob Krauss; I made a lifetime friend of Bob in psychology. There were a bunch of people in anthropology. Irving Louis Horowitz, do you know [him]? Well, he's a piece of work. I think he just recently died, but he was a very, very powerful, nationally powerful guy, who came in with the journal called *Trans-Action*. Do you know about *Trans-Action*? Well, Ernie brought in Irving Louis Horowitz, a very high-powered guy. There are legends about him. Some of them are pretty nasty, but he was a powerful voice. [Editor's Note: Sociologist Irving Louis Horowitz, who served as the chair of the sociology department at Livingston College from 1969 to 1973, died in 2012. In 1962, Horowitz founded the journal *Trans-Action*. Gerald Pomper joined the Rutgers faculty in 1962 and taught political science at Rutgers College, which was at that time called the College of Arts and Sciences. He then served as the founding chair of political science at Livingston College. Dr. Pomper is a Board of Governors Professor of Political Science at the Eagleton Institute at Rutgers.]

[RECORDING PAUSED]

GL: This is Robin Fox. This is Warren Carrier. Oh, this is Amelie Rorty. [Editor's Note: Dr. Levine is referring to a photograph of the Livingston College faculty.]

MG: Yes.

GL: Did you know about her?

MG: I researched her when I was getting ready for this. She was a philosopher.

GL: Right. This is Kwame McDonald. I can't quite make him out.

MG: Rosenberg.

GL: Oh, I know him. [laughter] He was in psychology, too.

MG: What was his first name?

GL: I can't remember. What the heck is his name? I used to know him pretty well, too. [Editor's Note: Seymour Rosenberg served as a professor of psychology at Rutgers.]

MG: That is okay.

GL: Oh, what a woman.

MG: Who is that?

GL: This is, she's dead, Toni Cade.

MG: Bambara. [Editor's Note: Writer and social activist Toni Cade Bambara (1939-1995) taught at Livingston College from 1969 to 1974.]

GL: Yeah. I hired her. She's one of the four or five most amazing people I ever met. She's just a superb person.

MG: You hired Nikki Giovanni. [Editor's Note: Nikki Giovanni, a renowned poet, writer and activist, began teaching at Livingston College in 1969.]

GL: I hired Nikki Giovanni also, yeah.

MG: I studied her in college.

GL: Did you?

MG: Yes, as a women's studies major.

GL: Toni changed her name to Toni Cade Bambara, right. Yeah, she's an absolutely extraordinary woman. She kept me calm, because the racial issues were, as you know, pretty serious.

MG: Well, I don't know. You are actually the first person who has talked about that.

GL: Really? Did you read my little piece?

MG: Yes.

GL: Yeah.

MG: The people I have interviewed so far, it surprised me when I read your piece, because it seemed like this was an idealistic environment. People really credit Livingston with being the best part of their life. This is the first time I have heard about this side.

GL: Yeah. The valedictorian of the first Livingston graduation gave a speech which ended, "The only good thing I have to say about Livingston is goodbye." If you didn't get that part of it, you missed a lot.

MG: Yes, this is why this is so fascinating to me. Was it because of the racial tension, or was it because you had to work the kinks out or all of the above?

GL: All of the above. We didn't know how to do it. There was a guy, a vice president [associate dean for academic affairs], the guy who took Warren Carrier's job, Dean [Bernard L.] Charles. He's somebody else, if you could find him, you could dig him out. I remember signs, "Dean Charles, go home," in the elevators and so on. The racial stuff was from the start way beyond our capacity fully to understand and to come to terms with. Tillett Hall was the building. You've been in Tillett Hall, right? There's the great lobby there, whatever it is, [the Great Hall]. The second to third year of Livingston, there was one of the artists in the Livingston faculty, again, I can't remember his name, he did a display and they were large cutout figures of human beings. I can't even remember what they were about. Lynton and lots of us went, "Wow, what a great idea to make this an art space as well." It almost created riots. There was a lot of tension. They had to take the display down. We came to learn that that space, which we thought of as a fully public space, had been taken by, I don't know, all, some of the black students as their space and they felt that this was a deliberate attempt to displace them. Now, who would've thought that? We didn't know the culture that we were dealing with, and we just didn't know a lot. There was a kind of general feeling around. Ernie Lynton, that wonderful man, when Tillett Hall opened, laid down an enormously expensive and beautiful, I think it was called, a Rya rug. The day after it was laid down, as his way of showing, "This is the space you're welcome, and it's comfortable. We're making you at home," it was stolen. Some guy came in with a moving van, said, "We're taking this to be cleaned" and drove off. [laughter] It was a place where everybody was getting robbed. That's way overdoing it, but robbery was rife. The kids knew they had to protect their things, because if they left anything out, it was gone. There was a general unease. The black students, who simply had no experience of university culture, needed to protect themselves by creating their own tightly-knit community, so the separation was absolute right from the start. The opening day, when people moved into their rooms, there was disruption because the black kids didn't want the white kids. From the start, there was this deep unease, which went everywhere. There was a kidnapping on campus. Where did I read about that? I just read about that somewhere. I didn't talk about that in here, did I?

MG: No.

GL: No.

MG: What happened?

GL: Well, I don't know exactly what was at stake, but the guy who was kidnapped was finally released somewhere down in Princeton. There are people who know the details of this. I mean, I sort of watched with my eyes open and said, "What the hell is happening here?" There was one kid who threatened to commit suicide by jumping off the water tower, and the whole day everybody was trying to [prevent that]. It was a very difficult, difficult place. I had some wonderful students. There were some wonderful people teaching there. I mean, this letter, I'm still in touch with this guy, who became one of my good friends. [Editor's Note: The kidnapping discussed above took place during Livingston College's second year, 1970-1971. On March 12, 1971, Livingston commuter DeForest Blake "Buster" Soaries, Jr. was abducted from the Malcolm X house by five armed men, three of whom were Livingston students. Soaries was released later in the day.]

MG: I did not know who wrote that.

GL: He's somebody you might want [to interview]. He would talk a lot. I hired him, so he came in after me. He won't know a lot about origins, but he has a whole perspective. His name is David Leverenz, and I could give you his email address if you want. He's living in Florida now. [Editor's Note: David Leverenz taught at Rutgers for sixteen years and served as chair of the English department at Livingston College from 1975 to 1980.]

MG: I am heading there this summer to do interviews.

GL: Okay, so really you should absolutely see him. Before you leave, if you like, I could get you his email address. He's mentioning people, kids here, a wonderful student who apparently became a professor of sociology named (Robbie?) Rosenthal. He would be a guy. I can't remember where he's teaching now. [Editor's Note: Rob Rosenthal serves as a sociology professor at Wesleyan University.]

MG: I think you mentioned him last time.

GL: Did I?

MG: Or his name has come up before.

GL: Yeah. He's one of the people that David is talking about in here. The sense of things out of control was everywhere. I did a lot of stupid things. I hired Toni Cade, which was one of the smartest things I've ever done. I mean, she's an absolutely superb woman, a tough woman. Now, I remember she took me to a party once. Some white guy was giving her a lot of crap, and I got really mad. She said, "This happens all the time, George. Just take it easy." The question of race, it wasn't secondary. It was primary. The black kids felt, I can't speak for all, and even close to all the black kids, but a lot of the black kids felt that they were being shortchanged, that they weren't getting the kind of real training that they needed. Everybody felt shortchanged. The save-your-world white kids felt deeply disappointed and disillusioned that the black kids wouldn't talk to them. There was segregation, self-imposed segregation. There was that, for me, traumatic poetry reading that I talked about here.

MG: Why not tell us what happened there?

GL: I hired Toni and I hired Nikki Giovanni. I don't remember whether I did it or somebody else did, but there was another poetess named Sonia Sanchez. I thought, "What a great idea? We have all these bright young poets. Why don't we have a poetry reading?" Nikki and Sonia, I think there was a third poet. Toni didn't read. She didn't write poetry. Anyway, at least Nikki and Sonia read. Sonia was much more aggressively anti-honky than Nikki, and they read in this big room. It must have been a couple hundred people, and they were all black without exception, except me, my pal David and my wife. I was a little alarmed at that, not that I was surrounded by blacks, but that the whole point of this is to open it up, not segregate it. The reading goes on. Some of the poetry I found sort of offensive, but I asked them to come, so go with it. Then, when the poetry ended, the poets asked, "Anybody want to ask anything?" One kid immediately

raised his hand and, looking over at us, says, “What these honkies doing in here?” I said, “Holy shit.” That was really shaking. I sat there, and David and I looked at each other and Marge. Then, a really interesting guy that I had hired named Aijaz Ahmad, who was himself a poet and an intellectual and he’s achieved some kind of large status as a theorist, he came over to me and said, “George, I really think you’d better get out of here.” David and Marge and I left. I don’t know that anything would’ve happened, but it [was] beyond unpleasant. It was very shaking. What’s the point, if what happens by opening things up like this is that it just becomes a segregated activity with intensified hostility? My liberal dreams went down the tubes. [laughter] There were no repercussions, but it was just evidence that we hadn’t thought things out, with the best of liberal intentions, which often happens to us liberals, and things didn’t work out. There were other kinds of problems. I discovered that the broader community, the extra-academic community and most of the academic community, thought of Livingston as an all-black college, which it most distinctly was not. I’m not an aggressive guy. I don’t aggress [laughter] much at all, but I remember being at a party with the chairman of the Rutgers English department. He began to say stuff that I found really offensive about Livingston College, and I pushed him into the sink. [laughter] The tension was everywhere. Whatever anybody tells you about Livingston, you have to tell me about these idealist responses that you have gotten so far, because my experience of it was just extraordinarily painful. It taught me a lot about life and about how liberal good intentions need to be backed up by something much more substantial than the intentions. It was very difficult and painful. In fact, in 1974, still believing I could do something with experimental education, I accepted a job at a new experimental branch of the State University of New York [at Purchase College]. Can you believe I can’t remember?

MG: I should have it in my notes.

GL: I just had it on the top of my [head]. I was just about to say it, and it disappeared. It was a college that was on the model of what I think Lynton first had in mind. It was an experimental college. You don’t give grades. You write summaries of what the students do, very interdisciplinary.

MG: Where was that school?

GL: It’s in Westchester. It’s the name of the town. I pass it on the highway all the time. I can’t believe that I don’t remember that. I just couldn’t take it anymore. I agreed to go, and I knew as soon as I made that commitment that it was not a smart thing to do. For one thing, I would’ve lost my connection with the graduate program, because it was an undergraduate college. It’s the branch that has a theater.

MG: I am curious if any of this was anticipated in these planning conversations, dealing with potential racial tensions on campus.

GL: Interesting. I don’t think so. We weren’t stupid. Our intentions were so good. The summer before Livingston opened, we agreed that we should have a summer session as a kind of introduction [for] these minority kids to the world of college. In fact, we had a summer session over on Douglass College, and I taught a class there. I should’ve realized that there were going to be problems. It was very friendly and amiable. Lynton kept inviting kids down to his

Princeton house with his swimming pool. One time, some bright kid said, “We’re ruining the real estate values.” [laughter] I taught a class in writing, getting them into the college mode. On one of those trips down to Lynton’s house, I turned to one of the kids in the car, and I said, “You know, Joe,” whatever his name was, “you owe me a paper.” He said, “Don’t hold your breath.” [laughter] Wow. I didn’t hold my breath, and I never got the paper. I suppose we knew that there were going to be problems, but I don’t think we were smart enough to understand the degree and the difficulty. I think we all overestimated human intelligence, that is, these kids could be really, really bright, but they have no experience with college and no reason to trust the white guys who were doing them a favor. I think we were white guys doing them a favor, and lots of them perceived it that way. We were white. Well, there were black guys, and there was a really good couple. There are a whole bunch of people whose names have now slipped my mind who were very good. There were some black faculty, but the hotshots were all white. Race was not peripheral. It was absolutely central, and it started the day the doors opened. Whatever anybody tells you how wonderful Livingston was and I think it was fundamentally a great idea and certainly a well-intentioned idea, it didn’t work.

MG: How did this group figure out the practicalities of starting a college, funding, registration dates?

GL: It was always part of Rutgers. Although each college was largely independent, everything finally filtered through the administration. Indeed, one of the crises, now that I think about it, for Livingston was that we insisted that all courses be four [credits], which meant that you can get twelve credits with three courses, instead of twelve credits with four courses. A lot of the faculty on other campuses said, “You lazy bums.” I said, “No, the point of this is to give more space and the student will be able to write more and we will be able to invest more.” Indeed, some of the faculty that I hired just took advantage of the fact that they could get away with teaching two courses. I think the students figured that out too, a lot of them did, way before the faculty did. I was defending four-credit courses, when even some of the students knew, well, they wanted the credits, they’d take credits as students must wherever they can get them, but they weren’t getting their money’s worth. I don’t know whether we stuck on, we probably did have a fourth hour somewhere along the line. I can’t remember how that worked, but even things as simple as how many credits per course and so on caused problems. Of course, if you took four credits for a course, you could graduate from the college, by university standard, you could graduate from the university with a quarter fewer courses. I hired an ex-convict to teach. [laughter] He wrote a book. His name was Nathan Heard. The degrees of our innocence and stupidity. I have to get some more water. I hired this ex-convict, a big hulking guy, seemed very nice. Probably was in his way, but it would be hard to find him in class. He claimed one time, with a set of papers, that somebody stole his car, had all the papers in it, so he never returned the papers. I don’t believe that for a second. [laughter] He was used to conning all his life and why not con me. Every detail got us into difficulties. As for the logistical planning, that was just sort of normal, except that we wanted a different amount of courses and credits and so on.

MG: What had the convict been in jail for?

GL: I think some violent crime. I don’t remember.

MG: Did you have support from the administration?

GL: Oh, yeah, oh, yeah. They hired a bunch of phonies as well. [laughter] We all did. It became very difficult, and you could see how easily the racial tensions could grow because as we got conned by people who spent their lives surviving by conning, it became increasingly difficult to separate our dislike of those people from racial dislike.

MG: The convict was a black man.

GL: Yeah. Kwame McDonald, he had a regular name [James Cornell], and he suddenly donned these robes and called himself Kwame at a certain point. He was, as I recall now, a phony. These are matters that had to do with experience, which those of us who were enthusiastic supporters of the college didn't have. Lynton, whom I really liked, was a passionate idealist, and he really didn't know when he was being conned and when he wasn't. Nor did I; nor did most of us. Just as the black kids came into a culture they didn't know and didn't trust, we were thrusting ourselves in the middle of a culture that we didn't know. Increasingly, if you don't know it, you don't trust it. It was messy.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

MG: The pictures were not captioned with who they were.

GL: I recognize a lot of these people, but I can't remember their names anymore.

MG: How was it determined that there would not be grades?

GL: There were grades.

MG: Honors, credit and no credit.

GL: Honors, credit or no credit. Well, I don't know that I can trace the way that was decided, but we felt very much that the traditional emphasis on grades was pedagogically distorting. Once again, honors, credit, no credit is just grades. Finally, we tried to diminish the force of the credits. I remember one sweet girl. She was not all that bright. In one of my courses, I really tried very hard to help her, so we did a lot of independent study as I tried to help her. She thought we were pals, and we were. I like students, and she was serious and so on. At the end of the semester, she still was not a great student, so I just gave her credit. She never spoke to me again. It didn't make any difference. The thing about the place [Purchase College], I almost had it on the tip of my tongue and it didn't come out, is that they really didn't give grades. What they did was give, you had to, as a faculty member, write a sort of extensive summary, very exhausting. I ultimately didn't go there, even though I had said I would. Not giving grades is also not [helpful]. The kids want to know where they are. If they're not doing well, they should know that. You might as well just do it, or at least that's what I ultimately came to think. Honors, credit, no credit was a way we felt to diminish the force of grades. As an undergraduate, you will know this, but I mean, sometimes when I'm teaching a class and I'm really excited about the subject and I think the students are really excited about the subject, the major question

is, “What do I have to do to get an A?” It makes me very sad, but of course they want an A. We didn’t figure out how to resolve that. Certain experimental schools really don’t give grades, but they have such close connections, supervision and commentary that the student gets a sense of what it all means but also understands why that evaluation is what it is. We didn’t do that, and we had too many students to do that anyway.

MG: Were you consulting or using other colleges like this for models, maybe Hampshire?

GL: I remember them being invoked in discussions, but once again I think it would’ve been Lynton and Carrier and others who actually would’ve done the liaison. I don’t remember anybody from other colleges coming down to talk to us during that one year.

MG: You were not borrowing from other colleges that were doing similar things.

GL: Probably we were, but I don’t remember the details. We did know that there were colleges that gave no grades. We did know about Hampshire. There are other people who know more about this than I do. It’s not that I forgot. I don’t think there was much that I actually was involved in. Much of that kind of thinking, we knew and we invoked them every once in a while.

MG: What would they have been at that time?

GL: Well, Hampshire was the most famous. There was one in California.

MG: How was admissions determined, who got accepted and who did not? What were the standards?

GL: That, I really don’t know. I wasn’t on the admissions committee. As you do this, you really have to find somebody who was in the administration. My job was the department and I was occasionally involved in [college governance]. There was a faculty governance thing, except we had students on the faculty governance thing. I was involved with that. The actual logistics, you really need to find an administrator, and I don’t know who they would be at this point.

MG: I guess I was curious how you recruit people to a school that is in its first year.

GL: I do know that they tried very hard before I got there, for the opening year, to recruit from the better schools and to persuade bright young people that this was progress and this is where they could make a difference. They certainly did bring in a lot of very bright kids. I think the reputation of the college, at some point, there are applications to Rutgers University, I’m just trying to reconstruct this, and then you can choose Rutgers, Douglass, Livingston, Cook. As I recall, I think the proportion of kids who wanted to be at Livingston kept going down.

IG: Do you think that the level of excitement that went into the preparation for Livingston sort of had an effect on why you were so unprepared?

GL: That's interesting. It's possible. The point is that we were very enthusiastic for change, for equality, for interdisciplinarity, for newness. We didn't think enough [laughter] I guess, or we thought that since everything was so badly done by the rest of the world, if we just change that, we'll be able to do it. I do think that the transition by the administration even before I arrived from this sort of high-powered interdisciplinary college on the Hampshire model to an open college inviting minority students, I do think that that was done unintelligently, in that the commitment to the idea was so great and the desire to make it work so great that we didn't think, they didn't think nor did I when I accepted the offer, how much you needed to know before you could do that. In a way, the commitment, it's sort of like what people are saying about [Senator] Bernie [Sanders] these days. Bernie has got these great economic ambitions, but he hasn't figured out how to do it. We didn't say we hadn't figured out how to do it, but we hadn't. Sure, it would be fair to say that there is an enthusiasm that made us think it was possible to do things that really required much more thinking and much more experience. Ernie hired me, but he should've hired somebody who was used to teaching in metropolitan schools, for instance. I taught at Indiana, for heaven's sake. You couldn't get more Midwest than Indiana. What he was going for was intellectual capacity of one kind without realizing the necessity of intellectual capacity of quite another. I'm sounding doom and gloom about Livingston. Obviously, not everybody shared that sense, and I would be very interested to hear from people who felt that the experience was really a good one for them. Like, this kid Robbie, if you could find Robbie Rosenthal. He was one of the really bright ones with a real passion for equality and justice and all that sort of stuff. He went through the whole first sequence. I don't know that he would look back now and say that was a bad thing for him. He might say, "Yeah, there were problems, but." I really don't know exactly what he would say. He knew all the problems, and he was clearly disappointed in many things that happened. For many, it could well have been a kind of pertinent experience, where they got a much richer sense of what life is really like than they would have if they went to a conventional university. I just don't know. Now, I would like to think that I learned a lot from the experience. [laughter] I just felt very strongly that in the end I didn't know what I was doing. Most of the people I liked and cared for didn't know what they were doing either.

MG: One of the problems seems to be racial segregation, but it also led to a strong black arts and black power movement on campus. Were you aware of that?

GL: Oh, yeah, yeah. Black power was really important. Of course, it was very scary for the white students. The kids absorbed it from the culture of the moment. There were very strong calls for black separatism, and there were elaborate justifications for what were in effect segregated classes, not only racially but in gender as well. Feminists would say, "There are things we can't talk about if there are men in the room." Toni made a really good case for all-black classes in some things. Boy, she was very persuasive and so sane. She was just a really intelligent woman who knew exactly what she was doing and knew what had to be done in order to get the things that we wanted to get done. Black power, in effect, meant separatism, and no liberal can bear that, so it was very hard. I let the women teach their women classes and the blacks teach their black classes, and I didn't see how not to. Yeah, so black power was very strong on the campus.

MG: Was the campus feeling the effects of the Newark and Plainfield riots in 1967?

GL: I think so, yeah. The atmosphere of those times was really very tense. In effect, the school wanted to imagine a way to work through these problems without breaking into riots. I don't think we had any riots. We had little minor violences, but nothing, I don't remember sit-ins. Have you come across any?

MG: Not that I remember right now, but I do not have the best memory.

GL: Well, neither do I. [laughter] Livingston didn't really exist in 1968 when the big sit-ins were happening. Kent State happened during [1970]. There was a lot of stuff all around. It was in the air. You couldn't escape it. Part of what Livingston theoretically was about was a way to deal with the issues that produced this kind of violence. I guess we managed to avoid violence. That's not bad, but really dealing with the issues would've meant genuinely equal education and a sense of real equality, which I don't think [happened]. The fact that the culture of Livingston tended to be separatist was I think a bad thing, but given the culture at the moment I don't see how we could've avoided it. I did have some of the worst classes I've ever taught where I was legitimately intimidated. The courses I taught tended to attract white students. I would have black students but not very many. If you're teaching a course in nineteenth century fiction, you're not going to get a large population of minority students. Every once in a while, I would get a student who would be disruptive in ways I couldn't quite manage, appealing to conscience, why isn't there a black writer here? A couple times, there were some serious tensions that developed that way. I'm sure that happened in many classes, but it was a discovery for me. It shouldn't have been a discovery, but the stuff that I liked to teach, that I'm an expert in as it were, this stuff wasn't going to attract the attention of kids from minority cultures. It just wasn't. [Editor's Note: On May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen shot and killed four students at an anti-war protest at Kent State University. Nine others were wounded. The protest at Kent State was one of many demonstrations nationwide in early May 1970 opposing the expansion of the war in Vietnam to Cambodia.]

MG: There was a large population of Puerto Rican and Latino students on campus.

GL: Yes.

MG: Where did they fit into all of this?

GL: Well, they tended to split off as well. I mean, there was probably as much tension or maybe even more between Latino and black as there was between black and white. There were some pretty good [professors]. I just can't remember, but there was a very good teacher whose picture I saw here. I can't remember her name [Maria Canino], who had a lot to do with the Latino population. I had a guy in my department who handled the Latino kids a lot and who ran a place in New York City, Nuyorican [Poets Café], Miguel [Algarin]. It was very famous and Latino poets would go there all the time. I had my Latinos, I had my blacks and I had my white liberals, but it tended to fragment.

MG: Was Ernie Lynton the first dean?

GL: Yeah.

MG: How was he appointed?

GL: Well, I assume that Mason Gross appointed him. I really wasn't there at the start and I never did investigate how did Ernie [get appointed]. Ernie was the guy who hired me, and he must have been an activist in the early '60s. He was a physicist. Interesting, right. I assume that Mason Gross and Dick Schlatter appointed Ernie, who was the instigator of most [of the planning for Livingston College]. He hired Warren Carrier. I don't know the history of those appointments or how it was done, but it would've been the earlier administration. Mason Gross, who managed to handle the [student protests] so brilliantly, was almost certainly interested in developing this new open kind of college.

MG: Was it Ernie that hired the dean in charge of black affairs?

GL: Yeah.

MG: Was that an anticipated role or one that developed after the school opened?

GL: I think it developed after the school was opened. I'm not sure, but I think so.

MG: Do you know who that was?

GL: I did. [laughter] I can't remember. I was hoping that there might have been stuff in here, but I guess not. [Editor's Note: Dr. Levine is looking at photographs.]

MG: I kind of wanted to ask you about the campus itself.

GL: Mason Gross, that's him.

MG: Yes.

GL: Yes?

MG: What had happened to Camp Kilmer?

GL: Camp Kilmer, yeah.

MG: What had happened to Camp Kilmer between the Hungarian Revolution, where all the refugees came through there, and the opening of the school?

GL: I don't know. I'm a bird watcher. When I arrived in this part of the world, I was delighted with that area because it was full of birds. There was nothing, some old Quonset huts and temporary Army buildings, many of which were used by the campus. My friend in psychology [Bob Krauss] worked in one of those old Army buildings and hated it. It was just empty. There's all that land where I saw Meadowlarks. I haven't seen a Meadowlark since they built up

that area. When we arrived, it was nothing. There wasn't even a stadium in that part of the world, and I loved it. [laughter] Well, I didn't love it for the University, because Livingston College was an awful place to be geographically. There was a geographer named George Carey who was a friend of mine. He's also one of those guys that Ernie hired. Outside of Tillett Hall, people parked in a big mud flat. I remember one day, the two of us were talking, I said, "This is impossible, you can't." We marched on Ernie Lynton and said, "Ernie, you've got to pave this, we can't." Bless him, within a week, we had a paved parking lot, but that was turning a mud flat into a parking lot is what we had. There was nothing there, absolutely nothing. The temporary buildings that were old Camp Kilmer buildings, many of them were still there and were used by the college. [There was] Tillett Hall, and then what did they call the dormitories? I can't remember.

MG: The Tower?

GL: Yeah, [the Quads] were built. In '69, they were just about finished, and that was it. There was nothing else. Oh, and then they built the library. Livingston College was, when I arrived, well, Tillett Hall was finished just as we got going, and the dormitories, the Towers, were finished that summer and the library. That was it. There was nothing for anybody. I haven't been there really, but I understand that now it's really a pretty groovy place. It's got all kinds of eating places and entertainment places and so on. Do you know the area on Livingston?
[Editor's Note: When Livingston College opened in the fall of 1969, the residence halls called Quad I, Quad II and Quad III had been completed. Tillett Hall was finished in the spring semester. In the second and third year of the college, construction on the North and South Tower dormitories and the library was completed.]

MG: It looks like a mall.

GL: It looks like a mall.

IG: I have been there a few times, but I have not spent enough time to know it very well.

GL: I wouldn't know it at all, because Livingston College was, for almost all the time I was there, was a set of four buildings surrounded by mudflats. People didn't want to be there. When Rutgers College enrollment overflowed, many kids were forced to stay in the Livingston dorms, which weren't overflowing, and that made them very unhappy. Now, apparently, you could have fun there. I don't know. I haven't been there.

IG: Well, it is very much more expansive. It is almost like a city within a city.

GL: Really?

IG: Yes.

GL: Wow, I've got to go over there. I have to take a look, yeah. There's good food and places for amusement.

IG: Yes, you can get a lot of different kinds of food there, and there is even a movie theater.

GL: Yeah, that's what I heard, a movie theater. That's right.

IG: Yes, I've been there once.

GL: Who knew? [laughter] It would've helped. That's not a minimal consideration. If you're used to living in a slum and you move into a slum, the attitude is different from moving to a place that's really pleasant to be in and Livingston was not a pleasant place to be in.

MG: Where were the classrooms?

GL: In Tillett Hall. Oh, wait, there was one other building that was built in those years, Lucy Stone Hall. The social sciences tended to be over in Lucy Stone Hall I think, but my classes were all in Tillett.

MG: I know a lot of schools at this time were being built under this philosophy of open learning. The architecture reflected that, no walls and doors. Did that happen at Livingston?

GL: You know, I read something about Livingston just very recently, since I spoke to you. Oh, you know what it was. You've read it, of course. Who was with us [in the first interview], the historian?

MG: Oh, Paul Clemens.

GL: Yeah, the Paul Clemens piece talks about how the openness led to robberies.

MG: In his new book?

GL: No, no. Did he not show you this paper on Livingston? Oh, my goodness. He has more of the history, the pre-history, than I do.

MG: Well, that sounds useful.

GL: Yeah, it was very good, yeah, "The Early Years of Livingston College." This will give you a lot of the answers to questions you've asked me. [Editor's Note: Dr. Levine retrieves a copy of the article entitled "The Early Years of Livingston College: 1963-1973: Revisiting the 'College of Good Intentions'" by Rutgers history professor Paul Clemens. Dr. Levine reads from the article to answer a question that Molly Graham had asked.] "In March 1965, the Rutgers Board of Governors appointed Lynton of the physics department."

MG: Oh.

GL: Here it is.

MG: Is this something I can make a copy of?

GL: Well, I don't know. I should really ask Paul. He gave it to me to read, and I was very interested in it. There's a lot of stuff in there.

MG: I can see if he can email me a copy.

GL: Yeah, why don't you ask him, because I feel a little funny about it. Yeah, that's where I read this stuff. This gives you the answer. I didn't remember. It said it was 1965 that the Board of Governors appointed Lynton, but it must have been through Mason Gross. He talks about failure.

MG: The guy who came to Indiana to recruit you.

GL: Poirier.

MG: What was your relationship with him when you got to Rutgers? Did you stay in touch?

GL: Oh, yeah. It's funny to me that his name is so totally unknown. He was the man. We had a very complicated but close relationship all the time that he was here. [He was] a very powerful man, a very eccentric man. Do you know when I said that Toni Cade was one of the four or five most interesting people I've ever met? Well, he's one of the other four or five. [laughter] Yes, indeed, he was very important in literary culture in America and a man who knew exactly what he wanted and went after it. As I said, he was the guy who in the 1960s made Rutgers one of the best English departments in the country. Beforehand, it was just another English department. Most of the people that I got to know outside of Livingston were these really interesting folk that he had hired.

MG: How involved with Livingston was he?

GL: Not at all. That's interesting to think about. There was the federated system. You know how that worked. At a certain point, all the major decisions of each college goes through a funnel, and one of the major decisions was promotions. Dick was very decisive. People that I thought were appropriate for Livingston, he thought were crappy, and at various times would shoot them down. There was some tension between us, but we were friends. As the most important person in the English department, [he] was pretty decisive in controlling tenure issues for people from Livingston, as for all the other colleges as well, and there would be a conflict of values along the way. That made for interesting tensions in my own life, because on the one hand, one of the most interesting people I ever met is not always on my side, so there were times when we had our little spats. I knew why he wanted me. I was very flattered by the fact that he wanted me. He was happy to have me at Livingston College, but he wanted me for the graduate program because I was okay as a normal literary scholar. I was flattered that he wanted me. As far as the politics of Livingston, that's my problem, not his. [laughter] When it impinged on his domain, then there were problems. [Editor's Note: Dr. Levine is referring to the federated college system at Rutgers-New Brunswick, in which each of the undergraduate colleges, Rutgers College, Douglass College, Cook College, Livingston College and University College, retained

its own budget, administration, faculty, academic departments, campus, admission standards, student body, curriculum and mission statement.]

MG: Who were your allies during that period?

GL: That's interesting you call them allies. I don't know. I mean, the people I worked with at Livingston, I had some very good friends. David, you really should, if you get a chance in Florida.

MG: I will.

GL: See if you could find him. There were people in the department. It wasn't so much allies. My best friend, this guy in the psychology department, he and I were on the same wave length completely, and he would be an ally, except that he, unlike me, gave up early.

MG: Who was that?

GL: Bob Krauss. As soon as Columbia offered him the job, he went. I didn't have anyone that I would call an ally. In certain times, I felt myself very close to the department whenever anybody from outside came down on us. On the other hand, I felt myself very antagonistic to the department when I felt that they were taking advantage, for instance, of the four credit course when they weren't really committed to the school but to their own little adventures. One of the reasons that I took that job at [Purchase College] is the emotional tension was very great. I was always on one side. I was for the department in one context and against the department in another context. I was deeply committed to the mission of the college and deeply angry at our own failure to figure out how to do it. My guess is that a lot of people felt like that. I didn't really have allies, and Dick certainly was not my ally. The chairman of the Rutgers department whom I pushed into the sink was not my ally. It was like I was living two lives, three lives or four lives maybe. When I did my graduate stuff, I was really comfortable and happy. Everybody was happy, and I was happy. The students liked me; the faculty liked me. When I was doing my Livingston thing, the faculty didn't like me. [laughter] It was very, very difficult. It wasn't a matter of allies or not allies. It's just where you were at what point.

MG: How did you come to find Toni Cade and Nikki Giovanni?

GL: To tell you the truth, I don't know how I found them. Toni was at City College for a while, and I think she came and found us is my guess. Well, I'll tell you a very awkward anecdote, which doesn't quite answer your question. Toni and Nikki were both hired for the first year. I remember early in the first year, I walked into the English department office. There was Nikki Giovanni, and I said, "Hi Toni." She said, "Well, all us niggers look alike." I'm capable of calling my daughter by my dog's name, but still there was something there. Toni, I knew immediately, just one talk with her, that she was the real goods. Nikki, I'm still a little skeptical about Nikki, [laughter] even though she's become quite well known as a poet. She was a nice woman, a very nice woman, and she was not militant and difficult. Nor was Toni difficult, but Toni knew what was what and knew exactly what needed to be done.

MG: What else about the first two years of Livingston?

GL: What else? I don't know. I've said a lot. I suppose I could be provoked into saying something if the right question were asked, but I don't know what the right question would be. It was a very difficult time for me, and I felt self-righteous and disappointed and angry and pleased to be at Rutgers and wondering whether I shouldn't have taken the job at Chicago. [laughter]

MG: You felt those things immediately.

GL: No, no. Before it opened, I was totally unequivocally committed. The first year was really hard, and I didn't know how it was going to evolve. By the second year, about 1970, I felt those things. The story of my taking the job at [Purchase College] was that, as I said before, I sensed that it was not the right thing for me to do, but I was so unhappy at Livingston I knew I had to do something. Just as I was starting to look around for houses in that area, a very expensive area, I get a phone call from Stanford University, and the guy says, "George, we'd really like you to come out and teach here for next year." I didn't hesitate a second. I just said, "Yeah." Then, I called up this college and said, "I'm sorry. I'm not going to do it." I pissed off a woman friend of mine who has never forgiven me, but I knew that going to Purchase was the wrong thing to do. I was committing myself to another school that was devoted to experimental teaching, which would be exhausting and problematic, and I realized that I was doing this because I wanted to pretend to myself that I was as idealistic as I had been. I was giving up something that I really love, which was my research and writing. When Stanford said, "Come for a year," I said, "I'm in," which meant I was going back to Rutgers after the year. It wasn't a permanent job at Stanford, but it gave me a year to breathe. One of the first things I did after that was to sit down and write this little piece about Livingston.

MG: Did that ever go anywhere?

GL: No, it didn't. [laughter] It never did. I wasn't quite happy with it, but it was purgative. At Stanford, they asked me to talk about Livingston College, to tell them, so I gave some little group a little talk about it, sort of like that. That was the smartest move I made. When I went to Stanford, I really wasn't thinking, "Oh, I want to go to Stanford." That would've been against my pedagogical principles. You go to Stanford, you teach the best students and you don't [have] worries. I thought, "I still want to commit myself to a state university." I knew that when I came back to Rutgers, I would be for all intents and purposes in the graduate program. I would teach a little at Livingston, but all that stuff that I had had to deal with would be in the past.

MG: Had you taken a sabbatical year in '71?

GL: Yeah, I think so.

MG: You went to England.

GL: Yeah, yeah, '71, yeah.

MG: Was that a nice breather, too?

GL: Yeah, the whole focus of my professional life shifted back to where it normally would have gone had I not been trying to save the world. I'm trying to remember what I did there. I know I did an anthology of early Victorian literature. I can't remember what else I did, but it was very satisfying. I had a bunch of English friends by that time. I remember the first time I went to England. The first time I went to England was roughly '65. My daughter was in nursery school. My son was in the little public school there, and he came back with a Cockney accent, which was [laughter] very funny at five years old. The second time, I remember my son going to school where the father of his best friend in school became my birding pal, who I'm going to see next week. That was when I started birding, and I'm just trying to remember what I wrote. I published my first book that wasn't a collection, [*The Boundaries of Fiction*], in 1968. Then, the big one that made my career, [*The Realistic Imagination*], didn't come out until [1981]. I was doing the research that led to that, and I did some other little stuff.

MG: In '71-'72?

GL: Yeah, yeah.

MG: Then, you came back to Livingston for another two years before you left.

GL: I don't know the chronology. I've lost the year timing, but when I came back to Livingston, people still wanted me to do administrative work. I don't remember whether I was acting chair for a year or something, but what happened was that the University was rethinking the federated plan. Have you talked with anybody about that? I'm sure this changed the nature of Livingston as well, but they were very dissatisfied with the federated plan. Every college had a full complement of specialists. If there was a Shakespearean at Rutgers College, there was also one at Douglass College, there was also one at Livingston College. Moreover, the students only took courses on their own campus. They started to move towards a new conception of the University, which would save them a lot of money but which would also bring together everyone in a unified system. What happened was that I, the Benedict Arnold that I am, I became the lead man in the English program for uniting all the departments, and I became the first chair of the federated department. As the chair of the federated department, you don't actually have control of anything that happens in the departments, but you can sort of look down on them the way Poirier did on me and become very influential. We made the transition to a unified college [faculty called the Faculty of Arts and Sciences in 1981], where all students could take all classes in all programs. I became chair of the new English department, at which time there were 104 full-time faculty. Today, there are forty-eight. It was a difficult but really interesting thing, and I think it was pedagogically the right thing to do. If your favorite historian taught a course on the Douglass Campus, you could go to the Douglass Campus and take it. You knew who were the people who were focusing on the stuff that you wanted to focus on. I then became a leader in the movement to reorganize the colleges, which meant that Livingston's perfectly distinctive mission and culture would disappear, which I assume it has. I was the bad guy in that. A lot of people were very upset, and it was very divided. This hasn't to do with Livingston, but there was a teacher who had been at Douglass College for a very long time and with the new organization it meant that there would be men in her class because anybody at Rutgers could take a class from her. She called me up, and she said, "I'm not going to teach any classes with men in them." I

said roughly the equivalent of, “Well, then you can quit,” and she did. There was that kind of attrition of the uniqueness of the different colleges. It would’ve happened without me because I was just one cog in the big wheel, but the distinctiveness of Livingston College disappeared with reorganization. You must have the date on that. What was it, about 1980?

MG: I feel like 1981.

GL: It could be ‘81, yeah.

MG: But I do not have that date.

GL: We’ve just gone from the beginning to the end. [laughter]

MG: Well, I was curious if after that sabbatical in ’71 to ’72, had anything improved when you came back to Livingston?

GL: No. It felt like the end to me. No, it hadn’t at all.

MG: I want to talk about the letter you had me read, and maybe we will take a break after that, because there are a few things in it that I had questions about. I think there was an allusion to this experiment at Livingston would have worked if it was in a different environment. I did not know if that meant not being under the Rutgers umbrella or being in a different geographical place.

GL: Yeah, I don’t know. I really did feel both literally that if the place had been more physically welcoming, it would’ve made a big difference, but it’s also true that the context, I mean, you had to have a sort of split personality to make it work. It wanted both to be a bright star in the regular academic firmament and to be this new kind of place, and it couldn’t. I’m not sure that’s what he meant. It’s been a while since I’ve really paid attention to this letter, but I think we all felt that both of those contexts were inadequate to what we wanted to do. It would’ve probably been better if it hadn’t been someone like me that Lynton had hired, that is, if it had been someone who was pedagogically trained and whose real focus, even his research focus, would’ve been on how to educate. Livingston really wanted to have bright research stars and invited a whole bunch of research stars on the assumption that if you’re bright, you can do it.

MG: In your essay you wrote, “The experiment was never seriously tried.” What more could have been done?

GL: Well, I think what I’ve just said probably has to do with it. That is, it never was completely what it set out to do. It wasn’t really developed in a way that would focus its attention entirely on the pedagogical problems that it was going to confront. I’m not sure that Poirier was wrong in his decisions about the particular faculty, but if you think about it, if you have a guy judging your faculty, who are committed to this profound pedagogical change, who is going to decide whether you get promoted on the basis of whether you’ve published with a good university press, it just doesn’t make any sense. In that sense, I think it wasn’t really tried. I’m not getting myself off the hook, because when I took the job, I was conscious that I wanted to be safe in my

research. I wanted to be able to keep doing that, which meant that half of me was not totally engaged. I thought that I could make them work and then, no, couldn't.

MG: What was Rutgers and Douglass doing in terms of minority enrollment?

GL: Well, people at Rutgers kept telling me, "Hey, look, we've got lots of black students, too." [laughter] I remember many conversations of that. I think it's true, although this you would really have to talk with other people who knew what was going on, that admissions of minority students were going up significantly in both of the other colleges. They would say, "You're not the only one." [laughter] I'm sure that was true, but I really don't know. After the problems that Mason Gross resolved, the University had to be self-consciously attempting to adjust with affirmative action and all that sort of stuff. Yeah, I think they must have been doing a lot but on the traditional terms.

MG: Was Livingston in these early years being covered in the news?

GL: It used to get bad press in the local press. I don't think it ever made *The Times* for instance. It may have. Somebody must keep a scrapbook somewhere. The little eruptions on the Livingston Campus never made national news, although we came close with that kidnapping. My little problem with the poets' reading, that's not going to make the newspapers. The local community was very distrustful of Livingston, because that's where all the blacks hung out. It had had a locally bad reputation. Happily, we didn't explode onto the national pages. [laughter]

MG: Can you remember what classes you taught there?

GL: I can't remember. A lot of them [were] straight literary classes. I remember once, it was the year my father died, that's why I remember it, I was teaching a sort of regular nineteenth century literature course. I know I did that once, and that's my specialty. I would teach courses more generally on a novel or on a problem, which would focus on literary texts much more than when I taught in the graduate program. Of course, I taught my subjects, the novel, Victorian prose, stuff like that.

MG: What was your wife's life like in New Jersey? Was she working?

GL: My wife was an artist, and she felt really isolated in Bloomington. In the course of the years, she developed communities of artists, so that she felt much more fulfilled in New Jersey than she did in Bloomington. In addition, we took advantage of New York a lot. We'd go to the ballet, go to the movies, go to dinner. While in Bloomington, which was for me perfectly satisfying, your community was the university and probably that part of the university that you occupied. We would go to English department parties, and every party would have the same people in it. That sort of wore on my wife some. Being a faculty wife in Bloomington isn't nearly as much fun as being a faculty wife here, where you don't have to be a faculty wife. You can have a whole life beyond the University, so it was much better for her here. I was a little wary about coming back East. I fled the East when I was a kid. It turned out that it was good. It was fine for me [coming back East], although I have to say one thing that I did have trouble with at the start is that when you are in a university town in the Midwest, you have a community.

Whether you like it or not, [laughter] it's there. I couldn't get used, in the first years, to the fact that it was a big deal to visit a friend here. One guy lives in Plainfield, another guy lives in Princeton, another guy lives in New York. You have to be invited. We used to just sort of stumble over into each other's houses. It was just a totally different culture. I'm comfortable on a smaller scale, so I was perfectly happy out there. Here, most of my friends were academics and still remain academics, but they might be from Columbia. They might be from NYU [New York University]. They might be from anywhere. In fact, this reminds me of an early experience. When I was in my first year or two, we had a lot of Princeton connections because I lived in Princeton and so on, and I remember feeling like a real alien when I went to the Princeton parties. Or I'd go to Rutgers parties that were held in Princeton and feel, "All these people are talking about Princeton. What's going on?" [laughter] I mean, it has nothing to do with me. I'll never forget. We went to one party, which convinced me I was never going to live in Princeton again, where a woman said, "You know, when I come off the highway and get towards Princeton, I roll down the window." Anyway, so I thought Princeton is not for me. Most of the people I know and care for are or were academics, but they don't all have to be from the same department, which is what it was in Bloomington.

MG: Ian, do you have any questions that I forgot to ask about Livingston?

IG: No, nothing that I had in mind.

MG: That is okay. I think I am going to try and get in touch with Paul.

GL: Yes, you should.

MG: So I can read that before I leave the Livingston chapter.

GL: Yes.

MG: Would you be open to getting together again and we can pick up with whatever I discover?

GL: I can't imagine there's anything more to say, but sure, if you want to, I'm fine. I'm retired.

MG: [laughter] Well, I might have a few more questions about Livingston after reading what he wrote.

GL: Right.

MG: Then, I want to ask about your later career and life and talk about birding. [laughter]

GL: Oh, that would be fun, yes. I'd be very happy to do that.

MG: You have been so generous with your time again, and I really appreciate it.

GL: Well, because I'm retired. [laughter] It's fine.

MG: This has been a treat for me. If there is anything I am leaving out about today's conversation, let me know.

GL: You've just tapped in, and [makes a spitting sound] out it comes. A lot of stuff I didn't remember. That name of that college is driving me crazy. What's the SUNY college that's sort of on the border of Connecticut and New York State?

MG: We will have to look it up. We will put it in the transcript later, too.

GL: Yeah, yeah.

MG: Well, I will turn this off for now, but I want to thank you again for all the time you spent with us today.

GL: It's a pleasure.

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

Transcribed by Jesse Braddell 7/14/2016

Reviewed by Kathryn Tracy Rizzi 1/1/18