

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH JENNIFER MESSER

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

KATHRYN TRACY RIZZI

NEW BRUNSWICK, NEW JERSEY

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TRANSCRIPT BY

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Kathryn Tracy Rizzi: This begins an oral history interview with Jennifer Messer, on November 17, 2022. I am Kate Rizzi, and I am in Branchburg, New Jersey. Jennifer, thank you so much for joining me today to do this interview.

Jennifer Messer: You're welcome. My pleasure.

KR: Please state for the record where you are located today.

JM: Sure. I am in Athens, Georgia.

KR: Where and when were you born?

JM: I was born in New Brunswick, New Jersey, on February 14, 1969. It was called Middlesex Hospital at the time. I think it's now Robert Wood Johnson. [Editor's Note: Established in 1884 as New Brunswick City Hospital, Robert Wood Johnson University Hospital went by the name Middlesex General Hospital from 1916 to 1986.]

KR: Let us start off talking about your family's history. What are your parents' names?

JM: Sure. My mother, her name was Susan Maul, M-A-U-L, and her maiden name was Bernstein. She was originally from Brooklyn, New York, moved to Old Bridge, New Jersey, when she was late in her late teens, I think maybe late in high school. My father is Glen Maul. I think he was born in Newark, New Jersey, and grew up in Iselin and then Matawan. He met my mom in Matawan, I believe. He was a little bit younger than her. He graduated from Rutgers, I think, in 1969; the year I was born, he graduated.

KR: What stories did your father tell you about his years at Rutgers?

JM: We grew up in and around Rutgers my whole life. It was interesting to hear his stories based on the fact that we lived near Busch Campus. He worked on Busch Campus. He lived in Davidson, the dormitory on Davidson Road. He would tell stories about--I think back then, they just would do silly things, like they rebuilt a Volkswagen Beetle inside the dorm. They took it apart and put it back together. I remember hearing that story in the '60s. This was just during the war, so there were protests, and my mom and my dad took part in those. I don't think he ever told me about anything on campus. I know they went to Washington, D.C. and did some anti-war protests.

What else did he tell me while he was in school? I know he went to Cook College. I think he was going to be a veterinarian, but I don't know what degree he actually ended up graduating with. I can't remember. There were some photographs--oh, there used to be some photographs of me, when I was a baby, at his graduation. They graduated in the stadium. So, I remember seeing some pictures of him in his cap and gown in the Rutgers Football Stadium. I believe they lived in a married student housing area that was built probably around the war, maybe World War II. I remember it was kind of near where I grew up. They had torn everything down. Oh, wait--you know what, let me back up. That was one, but they actually lived on a road called Osborne Lane in Piscataway. I don't think Rutgers owned that, but they did live in some married

student housing. That was a big thing. I think people got married a lot younger back then, and families were more common. So, I was literally born and raised on the Rutgers campus in Piscataway. Those are the stories I remember from him, and then, again, it was just my whole life was just one big story about Rutgers. [Editor's Note: The original Rutgers Stadium stood from 1938 to 1993 on Busch Campus. The replacement stadium's name is SHI Stadium, and it is still located on Busch Campus. Busch Campus of Rutgers was formerly known as the University Heights Campus until 1970 when Charles L. Busch donated ten million to the school. In 1971, the Rutgers College of Agriculture was renamed Cook College. In 2007, it was renamed the School of Environmental and Biological Sciences when the reorganization of the undergraduate colleges at Rutgers-New Brunswick occurred.]

KR: I am curious if you know how your father was impacted by the Vietnam War draft.

JM: I do. Let me make sure I get this straight. My memory--I mean, if he was here, he would probably be correcting me--but in my memory, I know that he and my mom had discussed moving to Canada. He was not going to serve. There was a point of major conflict between him and my grandfather, who served in World War II and was in the Navy, served in the Pacific, although my grandfather, during his lifetime, I never really spoke with him about his time in the war. My grandfather worked for Rutgers as well. My grandfather was--I don't know what they call it now--sort of like a physical plant [employee]. He worked in the mechanical room or whatever, like maintenance; he did maintenance in buildings and things like that. That's kind of how I think he got my dad a job. Anyway, about the war, certainly, they were against it. I do remember hearing my parents talk about the lottery system. Clearly, my father must have drawn a high number or whatever--I guess it was a high number--because he didn't get drafted and he was also in grad school. I can't remember if his enrolling in graduate school was part of [avoiding the draft]. I think, at one point, that was a way to avoid being drafted, but then that was gone, and then, towards the end of the war, they were doing the lottery. He must have picked a number that did not allow him to have to serve. [Editor's Note: Exemption from the draft for graduate and doctoral students was discontinued in 1967. In 1971, the federal government ended four-year student deferments. Instead, students would only be allowed to finish their current semester before being drafted. On December 1, 1969, the U.S. Selective Service held the first draft lottery, which was broadcast live on television and radio. The lottery selected birthdays to determine the order in which men born between 1944 and 1950 were called to report for induction in 1970 during the Vietnam War.]

KR: You said your mom was from Brooklyn, and your dad was from Newark. Going back to their parents, to your grandparents, what do you know about your grandparents' lives?

JM: I wish I knew more. My grandparents on my mom's side, my grandmother was born in Brooklyn, I think, or we'll say New York City. I can't remember where in New York City. My grandfather was the last of ten children that emigrated from Russia. He was either born in Montreal, or they immigrated to Montreal; I can't remember. He was born--I can't remember the dates. Anyway, they emigrated from wherever they lived in Russia to Montreal, Canada. There was a big Jewish population there and then, from there, ended up in New York City. My grandfather's family ran, I think, a hardware store in downtown New York, in Manhattan, but they lived in Brooklyn. They met; my grandmother and my grandfather met in Brooklyn, got

married. I have this really cool class picture of my grandfather. I think it was in 1929, and he may have been ten or eleven. I always look at that photograph, and it's one of those really long horizontal photographs from a school in Brooklyn and I think of how many of those boys probably ended up serving in the war. My grandfather on my mom's side did not serve in World War II. I can't remember what his deferment was based on, but he did not serve. My grandmother had two other kids. I have an uncle and an aunt who are both still alive. My mom passed away two years ago, but my aunt and my uncle still are with us. No one lives in New York anymore. Everyone lives in the South, which is interesting.

My dad's side, like I said, my grandfather served in the U.S. Navy. They--my grandmother--I don't know where they were born, but they lived in Newark. That was their home until they moved to Iselin. I think they moved to Iselin. My grandfather built their house in Iselin. He was just that kind of guy; he was a handyman, a self-starter. My grandmother, I remember, did work, which I think was interesting. Both of my grandmothers worked. They both worked outside the home at a department store, at Bamberger's, which then became Macy's. I have memories of visiting both of them when they were cashiers at a department store. [Editor's Note: Bamberger's was a department store chain headquartered in Newark that was in operation from 1893 to 1986. The company was acquired by Macy's, which then rebranded all Bamberger's stores as Macy's, including the flagship store in Newark. The Macy's in Newark closed in 1992.]

I don't remember them living in Newark. They moved well before I was born, certainly, I would imagine, before Newark suffered with the riots in the '60s. I'm not quite sure of the timeframe when they left, because I know my dad graduated from high school from Matawan, and that would have been in the timeframe when Newark was not doing so well. So, I think they got out of Newark before all of that and Newark changed, so they weren't part of that. Then, they moved to the South, too. [Editor's Note: The Newark Rebellion took place from July 12 to July 17, 1967 and resulted in over two dozen deaths, more than seven hundred injuries, fifteen hundred arrests and property damage exceeding ten million dollars.]

Everyone moved south. My grandparents on my mom's side ended up moving to a town called Valdosta, Georgia, in 1975, for a job transfer. My grandfather was a draftsman. He hand drew blueprints and things like that; I think it was for a battery company. So, they moved to Valdosta, Georgia. My grandparents on my dad's side moved to Florida. These were pretty rural areas back then in the '70s. We were still living in New Jersey, still living in Piscataway, and I grew up spending some time in the South. That's what sort of planted the seed that eventually led to me moving down here as well.

KR: Tell me a little bit about your mother. I think you said that she lived in Old Bridge.

JM: [Yes], she did. Like I said, I think she was like maybe [in] her senior year in high school when they moved there. Yes, I'll say senior year in high school. I know she graduated from high school. I don't think she went to the same high school as my dad. I think that she went to a different one and then worked in New York City. If I remember correctly, she just had some jobs working sort of like that *Mad Men* phase, like she was a secretary for an ad agency. She didn't go to college. She just kind of always worked. That was my memory of her. [Editor's

Note: *Mad Men* is a television series that aired on AMC from 2007 to 2015. The series was set at an advertising agency in New York City in the 1960s.]

We were not well off financially growing up. She oftentimes had more than one job, and she worked at our school in Piscataway when we were young. I think she assisted some of the teachers. She worked at Saint Peter's Hospital. She was a unit clerk, they called it. I think she was probably just an assistant on the floor to the nurses. For the most time, when I was at Rutgers, she was working for a gynecologist in town, in East Brunswick, I think. She just always had those kind of jobs, you know, medical assistant, assistant to the principal, or whatever. Then, my parents moved to Valdosta in my senior year at Rutgers to be closer to her parents. Then, she worked until she retired for another medical group down there, retired, and then unfortunately got sick. She had Parkinson's, and she passed away.

KR: In regards to your father working at Rutgers, I was wondering if you could trace what he did at Rutgers.

JM: Yes, yes. Again, this is my perspective. [laughter] This is my history. He wanted to be more than I think he was. He went to graduate school. He got a master's degree in, I think, social psychology. He's a very smart guy, but he also was an alcoholic. Something wasn't really going to ever click for him. He had this father who worked at Rutgers in physical plant and knew people, and I think my grandfather got him a job working for the housing department. I can't remember what it was called. So, my father just started working for housing. Because he was smart and capable, he kind of moved his way up, and he ended up managing the housing office for Busch Campus. I don't know how all that's structured today, but back then, you had different managers for each of the campuses, and they managed the housing and the students and all the stuff that went on with keeping all the students okay and the building safe and all that. He would do that for Busch Campus. Then, that was why we ended up--I think I wrote in my little summary--we lived on the property of the President's House. I don't understand how that became part of the deal. I was only six, so I don't know, but that was part of the deal. I guess he was maybe technically on call. I don't remember the other managers of the other campuses getting to live [on campus]. [laughter] I feel like, again, there was some kind of inside situation there that we ended up living on campus. [Editor's Note: The President's House of Rutgers University is located at 1245 River Road in Piscataway on the Busch Campus. The house dates back to 1929, when it was built for Roberta Johnson and her husband Robert Nicholas, members of the Johnson family. In 1939, the Rutgers Board of Trustees purchased the house and surrounding property and donated it to the university. Following renovations, Rutgers President Robert Clothier (who was Rutgers' president from 1932 to 1951) lived in the house, which has been inhabited by every subsequent university president since then (Andrea Goyma, "Piscataway building serves as University president's residence, March 31, 2011, *The Daily Targum*).]

He did that for six years, we lived there, and then I think he lost his job. I think he either was moved or he ended up then becoming manager at Livingston. I'm using these phrases, you know what all these different campuses are and these colleges, because they're not there anymore. Then, he moved to Livingston, and we had to get out of that apartment. My parents weren't well off. I remember being unfortunately subject to a lot of eavesdropping as a little kid of the struggles of what we're going to do. We ended up finding a house really a stone's throw away

from the golf course. We just kind of moved down the road a little bit to a house that my grandfather helped us fix it up. We moved off there. My dad worked for Livingston for a while. [Editor's Note: Livingston College existed as a coeducational undergraduate college of Rutgers University from 1969 to 2007, when it merged with the other undergraduate colleges of Rutgers-New Brunswick to form the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences. The Livingston Campus in Piscataway contains residence halls, classroom buildings, a library, recreational and athletic facilities, a solar farm, amenities such as a movie theater and restaurants and the Rutgers Business School. The Rutgers Golf Course is located on Hoes Lane West on Busch Campus in Piscataway.]

I started Rutgers College in 1987. My dad was working at the Seminary. I remember walking from Clothier Hall to my classes and seeing him mopping the floors and really just going, "Oh, that's heartbreaking." It was a really interesting time for me because I was struggling to figure out what my relationship was with my folks, and I felt bad for him. Then, they ended up moving; I think, from there, they moved to Valdosta, and things have been great since then, for the most part. [Editor's Note: New Brunswick Theological Seminary, a seminary of the Reformed Church of America, is located on Seminary Place on the College Avenue Campus of Rutgers-New Brunswick. It was established in 1784 and is still in operation today. Clothier Residence Hall is located a block away on the corner of Bishop Place and George Street.]

KR: You have this very unique experience of having lived in a house on the grounds of the Rutgers University president. Let us talk about that. This interview, as we talked about, is going to be a transcript. For someone in the future who is going to be reading this, can you describe the layout of the president's property at that time and where the house was that you lived in in relation to that?

JM: Yes, absolutely. It truly is still such a part of my memory and my brother's as well. I have a brother that's fifteen months younger than me, and this was probably just the most--I can't explain it--transformative, memorable part of our lives, and he would agree with me. I believe the building is still there. Every now and then, I'll do a Google Map search and look. I don't know what its purpose is. I would love to find out. Maybe you can help me figure that out someday. Before Route 18 was expanded and all of that jumble of highway, there was River Road and then there was the corner of River Road and Metlars Lane. (This is even before the Albany Street Bridge was built. I kind of even remember that. God, I sound so old.) That's where my bus stop would be. My brother and I would walk. There was a driveway with two mailboxes, and the address was 1245 River Road, and you could take that driveway all the way up. I'm pointing up this way. At one point, the driveway would veer off to the left, or it would go straight. If you go off to the left, you would go to the President's House, and if you went straight, it would go straight a little bit and then curve and then it would end where our building, our house, was. Those were the only two residences. [Editor's Note: In 2004, the New Jersey Department of Transportation completed the first phase of the Route 18 extension program. The project extended Route 18 from River Road to Hoes Lane and included the construction of a new alignment with new interchanges at River Road, Busch Campus and Metlars Lane, Livingston Campus. Prior to this, Route 18 ended at River Road on the southeast side of the Raritan River. The Albany Street Bridge spans the Raritan River and connects New Brunswick and Highland Park.]

I don't think that building was originally used as a residence. I believe it was probably a barn. There was a downstairs with some stable doors that had been converted into more like a basement. Then, you would go into the house, and immediately to the right, there was a door that you would open and then there was a staircase. It was an apartment above these stables. The apartment was you'd get to the top of the stairs and immediately in front of you was the bathroom. Then, to the left was a small kitchen, and then in that kitchen was a room off [of] the kitchen. It even had [louvered doors], the doors that have little slats. There was no door, and that was my bedroom. That probably was a dining room, but I used it as a bedroom. Then, if you were to go to the right of the staircase, there was another bedroom where my parents slept. Then, if you kind of looped around, there was like a larger room that was split into a dining room and a living space. Then, my brother's bedroom was off to the back. Then, there was a little sunroom with some really nice louvered windows that you could crank open. It was a really nice apartment. In my memory, as a six to twelve-year-old, it was pretty special.

Then, the President's House was, if you walked back down the stairs, go out the front of the building, it was paved. There wasn't a front lawn; it was paved like a parking lot. Then, there was just this expanse of land, I mean, beautiful landscaped property, and the President's House would be down there and to the right. Of course, they had a gardener, and I remember him. I can't remember what nationality he was. His name was Freddy. He spoke very little English, and he tended their gardens. There was apple trees and a cherry tree. I wandered that land like it was my own, so it was pretty cool. I felt very special there.

We would visit with Mrs. Bloustein, who was actually a pediatrician by training, and she was great. She was just a very interesting, fun person. They had dogs that I was afraid of because they were protective of the property, but I was just a kid. I think they were probably fine. They were Golden Retrievers. [laughter] They were not going to hurt me, but I remember being afraid of them. [Editor's Note: Ruth Ellen Steinman Bloustein (1923-1988) was a pediatrician and assistant professor at Robert Wood Johnson Medical School (of what was then the University of Medicine and Dentistry of New Jersey). Edward Bloustein served as the president of Rutgers University from 1971 to until his death in 1989. The Blousteins were married for thirty-seven years and had two daughters.]

Then, of course, the pool, which I talked about, was also adjacent. That was just a walk down the hill. I've been back. I went back there with my brother probably about fifteen years ago. We still have friends in Piscataway, and so we made a trip. Everything was fairly the same. I mean, things have changed. There was an outbuilding next to our outbuilding, and we used to call that the turkey coop. I believe we got the name from the previous people. I should back up and say that my father wasn't the first housing manager to live in that house. There was somebody that lived there before us. His name was Skip, and I can't remember what his last name was. My dad would know. He either grew up there--I mean, there's a history to that house that I would love to know a little bit more about. I guess that's the historic preservationist in me. There was a turkey coop where they stored outdoor furniture in the wintertime. There was a basement in this turkey coop. It was gross, but we used it as our clubhouse. We were these ten-year olds--you could imagine being a kid and having this secret space. You wouldn't be able to pay me to go down there right now and I would never let my daughter go down there, but it was the '70s and I don't

think anyone knew what we were doing. We played in the creek; I don't know if they filled that in or not when they built Route 18. I think they rerouted some streams. I'm not quite sure, but there used to be a stream that ran along the driveway. We played in those woods a lot by the university pool. I don't know if that's still there.

Yes, that's my memory. I swear, I could go on forever talking about how cool that was to be a kid on that [property]. We used to ski. [laughter] There was that huge hill that drops down. We would ski on that hill. We played a lot. We took full advantage. Luckily, I think, the president and his wife--there was never any sense that we were not permitted to do any of the things that we were doing, which was very cool. Now, I think the last time I looked, there was a big no trespassing sign there. I kind of was like, "Eee," but times have changed.

KR: Yes, there is very little information available online about the President's House, which is for obvious privacy reasons.

JM: Is it still his house? Because I had read at one time there was talk of moving out of there.

KR: Yes, yes. Dr. Holloway lives there, and the presidents before him lived there. Dr. Barchi did some renovations to the house, and then, before that, Richard McCormick did massive renovations to the house. [Editor's Note: Jonathan Holloway became the Rutgers University president in 2020. Before him, Robert Barchi served as the president from 2012 to 2020 and Richard L. McCormick from 2002 to 2012. Prior to McCormick's moving into the home in 2002, the President's House underwent 600,000 dollars in renovations. Then, in 2012, 90,000 dollars in renovations were made prior to Barchi's living in the home.]

JM: Did he really?

KR: Yes. It's still the President's House, but there is not much information.

JM: Yes. I have a friend that works for the State Historic Preservation Office down in Trenton, and I wanted to ask her if there was ever any kind of National Register nomination done. Just like in Georgia, at the university, they don't really want a lot of stuff designated historic for different reasons. I don't think there's a whole lot written up about it.

My only memories of the interior of the house--we never were anywhere in the residence area; I don't remember any of that--I do remember there were a lot of bathrooms. I remember being a kid and just thinking there must have been twenty bathrooms, because it was a public space, but they lived there. It was the biggest kitchen I had ever seen, and now, looking back, it probably wasn't even that big. The kitchen was old. That kitchen, I'm sure President McCormick trashed that kitchen, but it was kind of cool. They had a flower garden that was really cool; we didn't spend a lot of time in that. I'm not sure why. We may have been afraid of Freddy because he was this old guy and I think we just didn't want to mess with him, although Freddy would get us into the football games.

There was a hole in the fence somehow behind where the soccer field is now. That was a baseball [field]. That's where they played baseball. I haven't been there in a while, so I don't

know what is what. I mean, all that athletic stuff was different. There was nothing like what it is today. But you could literally sneak through a hole in the fence, and nobody went to the football games back then. My dad wanted me to make sure I told you this story--and it is an absolutely true story--that we had a Black Lab named Jimmy. One time, we were at a football game, and Jimmy got out on to the field during the football game. He did, running around on the field, and we were like, "We don't know him." That was pretty funny. The dog would just go around where everyone was tailgating because this was a spot where people tailgated. I think that's why there was that parking lot there. During football season, people still tailgated in our front lawn, and that dog, we just let him run around and he would come home and just be so fat from eating. [laughter] It was just a different time, just a different time. [laughter]

KR: Did you have much interaction with President Bloustein?

JM: We were shy. There was this weird--I don't know if it was a Jewish thing. I swear, it feels like it was old, old stuff, because I remember my mom and everyone was kind of like, "Keep a low profile," like at any moment, we could be kicked out of this gig here. Now, looking back, it felt very Jewish because I don't know why we were like that. He had no control over what we were doing. He came to my brother's birthday party, and it was a big deal. She was less threatening. She was more friendly with us. I'm going to tell you another story, which I think we need to put this on the record, but I'll do that in a second. He would mainly get driven to work, and the car, the police car, or whatever car, his car driver would go by and he'd wave like he was Joe Biden, he'd just wave at us, or when we were waiting at the bus stop. We would be down at River Road and he would wave to us, but that was it. I don't even know if he knew my name or not. We lost touch with them, and then I did go to her service. She passed away, and I remember going to a service for her with my mom. It was on Douglass Campus. That must have been when I was still in school, I guess, yes. So, not that much with him, but he seemed just very nice. Again, they were really low-key, easy people.

The other story I was going to share was my dad built a greenhouse off of that turkey coop that you could only access through a window, and this is all very hazy. Oh, and Ruth Ellen had a garden. Ruth Ellen was a gardener, and so she and my dad connected over that. There was this big fenced-in garden behind the turkey coop and before the pool. The pool was all the way down at the end of this plot of land, and then there was the turkey coop and then this nice garden that she tended to. We had our own little plot; we gardened a little bit. Anyway, my dad built this greenhouse, and I think he was growing weed. I think he started growing pot. [laughter] I just remember hearing this story--I don't remember it; this was not firsthand--but that Ruth Ellen was just like, "Probably not a good idea. Probably not a good idea." That was the end of that. I don't know, I think it was totally fine, it wasn't a big deal, but it was like, "Don't do that on state property." [laughter] Could you imagine today? [laughter] Our president here at the University of Georgia is straight as an arrow. Well, he wouldn't have even let anyone live on his property. [laughter] Yes, that was it. It was a good time while it lasted.

KR: This pool that you are talking about, this is the Rutgers outdoor pool? [Editor's Note: The outdoor pool located on Busch Campus is run by the University Swimming Association, Inc. There is no street address assigned to the pool. It is located off of Sutphen Road near Lot 48 and the Visitor Center. The pool was founded in 1960 by Rutgers faculty and administrators who

leased land from the university and built the pool with funds raised through selling bonds to members. This practice continues to the present. Membership is open to faculty, staff and alumni of Rutgers University and the New Brunswick Theological Seminary.]

JM: Correct.

KR: Okay. This was at a time before the Werblin Center opened. [Editor's Note: The Sonny Werblin Recreation Center, home of the Rutgers Aquatics Center, is located on the Busch Campus. The center opened in 1991. Sonny Werblin (1910-1991) was an alumnus of Rutgers (1931) who went on to become an entertainment and sports executive.]

JM: [Yes].

KR: At that time, what was the pool used for?

JM: The swim team would be over on College Avenue. What was the name of [the gym], The Barn? What was the name of the gym? [Editor's Note: The College Avenue Gym is nicknamed "The Barn" for its architectural style. It opened in 1932.]

KR: Yes, The Barn, and the pool was there. Yes, it was in the College Avenue Gym.

JM: Yes. I'm learning this more, actually, as I'm dealing with our university pool here in Athens, because we're struggling to keep it open, mainly because it's actually run by the University of Georgia and they don't want to do it anymore because it's really expensive. I found out recently that Rutgers, that pool was always privately run. It had a corporation, but it was run for faculty and staff and, I don't know, I guess alumni. I can't remember if alumni were part of it. I mean, my memory was that it was just a faculty pool. It was where you went if you were on the faculty and your family. The people I knew were faculty and their spouses. Yes, that was well before any Werblin Center.

This was just the summer pool. It was only open in the summer; it probably opened Memorial Day and closed Labor Day. It was managed by a guy named Norm Winter, who also happened to be the wrestling coach at my high school. I grew up knowing Mr. Winter, and he was the one who allowed my family to use the pool because we stored the water cooler. We may have stored the soda machine, too. I don't remember. Yes, so, we got to go for free every summer. It was awesome. It was amazing. Again, I think that was really transformative, to be able to spend all summer [at the pool], and I'm very nostalgic for it now because we have this community pool here, this university pool here, that reminds me of it.

I think it's still open. I've gone online and looked because I'm curious. They charge dues. What happened is when my dad lost his job, I think [my parents] tried to sneak in. They kept trying to go to the pool. I do have a memory of going there one time with my boyfriend and my dad and being [called] on the intercom, "Mr. Maul, please come to the front," and we got kicked out with my dad because we didn't pay any [dues]. We just kept going. My parents, I guess, had this sense of entitlement, like they should've been grandfathered in, but we weren't. That was the last time I went to the pool.

KR: Yes, the pool is still there.

JM: Cool.

KR: It still seems like it has the same uses, for faculty, staff and their families to go there. The person who works in the office next to me took her sons to the pool when she was raising them, so she would tell me stories about it.

JM: Yes, that's awesome. I love it. I learned to swim at that pool. I joined the swim team, although I quit the swim team pretty quickly because they had practice outside and it was still pretty cold at eight-thirty in the morning in Piscataway, and I was like, "Uh, not for me." I reconnected on Facebook with some people that went to that pool who actually went on to coach Olympic swim teams and stuff. Yes, somebody should do a history of the pool. I think it's an interesting story. There were some real characters there.

KR: What else do you remember about Busch Campus at that time when you were six to twelve years old?

JM: Oh, gosh, a lot. It was so interesting, that's that chapter, but then I lived on Busch when I was a student. I lived in Morrow Hall, when it first opened as a new dorm in the '80s or '90s. My experience was as a child as a neighborhood playground and also as a serious student. Different, a very different story than I think a lot of people who come from other parts, for just being a student. It was really my backyard at the same time, which I don't know, would I have done better? I don't know. I loved it. I did great. I loved school.

Anyway, as a kid, we rode our bikes everywhere, of course, and we were left alone. We were latchkey kids. Like I said, my mom worked, my dad worked, and my memory [is that we] would be just spending all day riding our bikes around campus. We spent a lot of time at the stadium. No security. We would play on the field. We would play in the sprinklers until somebody told us as kids, "That's not the cleanest water. You should probably not be playing in the sprinklers." We played in the bathrooms. We played in the stands. We just ran that stadium like it was a playground. It's kind of weird. We played tennis. The tennis courts were right down there, and I could walk from my house, cutting through to the Rutgers tennis courts. I still play tennis now, and I think that has a lot to do with it, from playing in the summer.

We played at the Student Center. The Busch Student Center probably couldn't have been more than five years old at that time. I'm not sure when it was constructed. If I look back, it probably looked like it was built in the '70s. I remember there was a bar, a beautiful bar, that was oak, an oak bar. I remember this because my dad would take us there, so he could drink and we would go play in the arcade. It was good times. There was a Wendy's. I remember when they first opened up, that was a really big deal that we got a Wendy's. That was fancy. Yes, I remember we would walk sometimes to the Student Center. I'm not sure why we didn't take our bikes, but we would take our dog and the dog would literally wait outside for us and just sit outside the Student Center until we were done, or at least it looked like that. Who knows, he may have gone off somewhere, but, yes, we would do that.

Yes, we just had a ball. We had so much fun. We played--there was a big gravel [lot]--I don't know if it's paved now, it probably is--but behind where our house was, it was a gravel lot. There would be gigantic divots and big potholes. I remember after it rained, we would play in those potholes, just being kids. We played on the baseball field. We just played everywhere. Right across from the stadium--I don't know if it's still there or not--there used to be a sunken park, a little park there. There were some paths and a little creek. My dad, actually, had carved all of our names in one of the trees a really long time ago. I can't remember when he first did it, but we were babies. We would go look for that, and I remember coming back fifteen years ago and finding it. It had grown over, but I still could find that tree. We did a lot of sleigh riding across from the pool. I can't remember the names of the road; maybe it's Sutphen Lane maybe. I can't remember the other names, but there used to be--I don't know, there's probably buildings on it now--but there used to just be a big field and we would go sleighing there. Yes, I mean, we just ran that place. So, it's weird; it would be really weird for me to come back now because I think most of that's built up now and utilized in different ways, but that's life. [Editor's Note: Johnson Park is a Middlesex County Park on the banks of the Raritan River across River Road from the Busch Campus. Sutphen Road is a road that runs through Busch Campus, and the Rutgers outdoor pool (University Swimming Association, Inc.) is located off of Sutphen Road.]

KR: Did you venture over to Livingston Campus at all?

JM: I lived there as an undergrad. I lived in the North Tower and I lived in the Quad. I originally got into Livingston as a freshman. I was a horrible student in high school, horrible academically. I liked doing everything but not studying. I did not get into Rutgers College. I got waitlisted at Douglass maybe, and again, that generational pull, my father knew somebody in admissions and got me into Livingston. I went my first semester to Livingston with the idea, I was like, "I'm getting out of here." I immediately transferred to Rutgers College and then ended up graduating from Rutgers with honors, which is kind of funny. I effed up and should have done better in high school. [Editor's Note: The Lynton Towers (North and South) are seven-story dormitories on the Livingston Campus. The Quads on Livingston Campus consist of three residence hall buildings named Quad I, Quad II and Quad III.]

As a child, I think the RAC had just opened. I remember the Blousteins giving us their basketball tickets. I remember getting tickets, going to some of the basketball games, and getting some really good seats and thinking that was pretty cool. So, they would let us use their tickets if they didn't go. Looking back now, that's kind of a big deal. [I] didn't spend much time in--Kilmer Woods was scary to me, because it was really big. I have friends that lived in a neighborhood off of River Road called Ross Hall Boulevard, and it kind of backed up into those woods. That was where the bad kids would go and smoke and stuff, so we didn't go back there. No, I didn't really, until I went to Livingston, and then I spent much more time on Livingston's campus. Now, I know it's totally grown and changed. There wasn't a whole lot there. I transferred to Rutgers, and then I was an RA [resident advisor] in the dorms to pay for stuff. I wasn't going to live at home, even though it was literally five minutes away. I ended up working in North Tower. So, I was still at Livingston, but it was okay. [Editor's Note: The Rutgers Athletic Center (RAC) or Louis Brown Athletic Center now goes by the name Jersey Mike's Arena. Located on Livingston Campus, the arena opened in 1977. The Rutgers Ecological

Preserve is a tract of land that includes a stand of mature upland forest known locally as Kilmer Woods.]

KR: Where did you live your first semester at Livingston?

JM: One of the Quads.

KR: Okay, yes.

JM: I liked that. That was an adventure. Oh, and I reconnected with the woman who was my roommate my first semester. We were friends in high school and then agreed to live together and then separated when I moved off to Rutgers. Yes, I just saw her the other day. I lived at Livingston for three--wait, one, two--yes, quite a bit. My senior year, I lived in Morrow Hall and maybe my junior year. So, I lived two years at Livingston, two years on Busch. I could have moved to Ford Hall. Is that even there anymore? [Editor's Note: Ford Hall was a residence hall on the College Avenue Campus that opened in 1915. It has been closed since 2013.]

KR: It is there. I am pretty sure it is vacant.

JM: That was an old historic dorm and was kind of considered *the* place to live because it was right across from all the fraternities; it was right there. I had gotten in there because I knew the housing people, but then I met a boy. He was a grad student, and so I ended up staying up on Livingston.

KR: When you were growing up, Piscataway would have been developing at that time. What was Piscataway like?

JM: Well, it's interesting, where we lived was such a little corner, and now I look back, it was almost not even part of Piscataway. I only lived across from Johnson's Park the whole time, so I only lived over there. I never really went to the other parts of Piscataway until I was, I guess, in high school, and maybe I had some friends that lived over there. There were some older sections of Piscataway, and to me, going back, thinking back now, it was a very blue-collar town. I'm filtering that through an adult lens, and having gone back there, it's just not the South either. So, it's kind of weird. I can't compare those two. But where we grew up was considered more of a higher-middle-class area, even though I was not--I mean, we were poor. We were barely getting by. My dad kept getting fired and my mom was working two jobs, but we lived in this area that's kind of where Schiano lives now. We lived in a really nice section of Piscataway. The rest of Piscataway, even before all the rerouting of all of the highways, there was 287, there was Route 18. There was a lot of not industry but a lot of warehouses and companies and corporate facilities because of all the transportation. [Editor's Note: Greg Schiano has served as the head coach of the Rutgers Football team since 2020. He coached the team from 2001 to 2011. During that time, Schiano built a house at 38 Logan Lane in Piscataway.]

I left when I was only twenty-two. It's interesting to even take some time to think about what I remember of that time period. I don't think it's much better today than it was. I think it actually might not be as nice as my memory, but there's a lot of people that still live there that went to my

high school and a lot of people like me that got out too. I would never move back there. I don't really even like visiting there, to be honest. [laughter] We just do a little drive through. When I come back to visit, I like to visit Rutgers, New Brunswick and Highland Park. Those were the places that were the most familiar to me. That's where my comfort zone is. I would get lost if I drove through Piscataway.

KR: When you were a kid, did you spend much time in downtown New Brunswick?

JM: As a kid, yes. I was aware, through my father, of the significance. I think downtown New Brunswick has some historic significance that people probably don't think about that much, but for me, we did. I knew that there were some old 18th century, 17th century cemeteries, the churches. There was more of a vibrant--I don't know what it's like now; honestly, I haven't been in a while--but there was a good commercial district. There was a record store that used to be on George Street that I remember going to; you had to go there to get tickets to shows. I remember that. I can't remember the name of it. Then, as a college student, absolutely, downtown was a big part of the scene.

I had a friend whose parents owned a jewelry store that was located on George Street when we were younger. They moved it out to Bernardsville, I think, in the middle of us being either in high school or later in college, but they used to have a jewelry store that had been there for generations. So, I always thought that was kind of cool. I remember when J&J built their buildings. I remember going to a restaurant--I was asking my dad about this the other day--there must have been some stores where J&J got built, and we would go out to eat at this one restaurant that was there. So, I remember that, when that changed. I remember when some of those other buildings were built. There used to be a Mexican restaurant across from the train station we would go to that I really liked when I was in high school. That was like the special place you went. [Editor's Note: In 1978, Johnson & Johnson announced that it would build its new worldwide headquarters in New Brunswick. Designed by Henry N. Cobb of the architectural firm I.M. Pei and Partners, 1 Johnson & Johnson Plaza opened in 1983. The headquarters consists of a sixteen-story tower and seven connected three-story buildings situated on a twelve-acre site. In the 1970s, Johnson & Johnson had begun buying businesses and properties in downtown New Brunswick in anticipation of the construction of its headquarters along Albany Street.]

Highland Park, for sure; I would say more than New Brunswick. New Brunswick was a little scary, edgy, I was going to say. Highland Park, if I wanted to pretend to be a grownup, that's where we wanted to pretend to be grownups. We would ride our bikes. It was [easy] to bike to as a kid, even though today I would never let my child do that. We would ride our bikes through Johnson's Park and then come out on one of the side streets and then right up the hill and then come into Highland Park. So, I did a lot of that with my friends, pretending to be grown up.

Then, I ended up living in Highland Park, actually, the year that I graduated from Rutgers. My parents had moved to Georgia, and I did not know what I was doing. I didn't know what I was doing. I had a history degree. I thought that was the greatest thing in the world until graduation, and then I was like, "Oh, shit. I don't know what to do with this, oh, my God." So, I had a freak-out year and worked odd jobs at Rutgers and then lived in Highland Park, and I liked that a lot.

KR: Let us talk about your education growing up. What schools did you go to?

JM: I went to Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School in Piscataway. I want to also just back up and say that before we moved into the house by the president, we lived in public housing in New Brunswick. So, it was a big deal to move; I mean, it was like the Jeffersons. [Editor's Note: This is referring to the theme song "Movin' On Up" of the television show *The Jeffersons*.] I don't have really any memory of growing up in [public housing]. We lived in public housing maybe from the time I was like two to six. It's a pretty long time for a little kid, but I don't really have much memory of that. Then, when we moved, we moved to Piscataway, and then I went to Martin Luther King Junior Elementary School. Then, I went to middle school in Piscataway, right across the street from that elementary school, a place called Conackamack Middle School. Luckily, when we moved out of the place on campus and into the house near the golf course, it was in the same school district. So, we didn't have to change schools. I finished at Conackamack, and then I went to Piscataway High School and graduated in 1987. All of those places were bikeable, so luckily, when your mom and dad didn't feel like driving you anywhere, I rode my bike a lot up and down Hoes Lane, where the high school is located.

KR: What were your academic interests, and then what did you do extracurricular-wise? Did you play sports, clubs, things like that?

JM: When I was little, I played soccer. I was one of the few girls that played soccer back then, so I had to play on a boys' team. I remember I was fine with that until, I think, they wouldn't let me. I think at a certain point they were like, "You can't play on the boys' team." So, I did that for a while. I played tennis. I swam a little bit until I quit, and I played softball. These were just recreation as kids. I played soccer briefly in high school. I played tennis in high school. Academic pursuits, I didn't really have any of those. I was more involved in--I liked choir. I sang in the choir, glee club. I played an instrument. I played the viola, so I was in the orchestra. What else? I did some of the musicals in high school. Yes, I wasn't on the debate team or any of those kind of things. I'm trying to think; surely, I did some of that stuff. I did student government in high school. I was an involved kid. I will say, now, looking back, I didn't want to go home because home sucked. Home was not happy. So, I stayed as busy as I could doing after-school activities, whether it be a team sport or choir practice or being in the play. Yes, I just tried to stay super busy all the time. I think I did homework and did all that kind of stuff. I did not test well. I was a horrible test-taker. Yes, I think that pretty much sums up what it was like. I was an outgoing kid. I definitely liked having lots of different friends from different groups. I was not in one group. I liked having friends that I felt were a little bit misfit like me. I oftentimes did not feel like I fit in. I was not the popular girl, but other than that, I think I fit in fine with lots of different groups.

KR: I am curious what role, if any, religion played in your upbringing.

JM: Not much. None really. My mom's side was not a practicing Jewish household intentionally. They were all pretty atheist by the time I got around. I wanted to be curious. We never joined the temple. We didn't have the money, really, and I just don't think the commitment was there to that. They did offer--I remember being a kid and taking classes in the basement of

Frelinghuysen, sort of like Sunday school classes for Jewish kids, but I don't think it was meant for a bat mitzvah or anything. I remember being in a Purim play, and that lasted for a little while but not very long. No, not much religion.

KR: You mentioned that your grandparents lived in Georgia and Florida. Did you get to do a fair bit of travel when you were growing up?

JM: Well, we didn't have a lot of money, so no. We would visit them. We would visit my grandparents on either side, mostly my mom. My mom was definitely closer to her parents than my dad was. So, I spent a lot of time in South Georgia as a child, which is kind of weird. Traveling outside of visiting family, [no]. It's just so interesting, and I look at the things that we try to do now as parents and even just as people getting out and seeing the world, I never in a million years would have thought that my parents would have ever taken me to San Francisco, where I just was.

KR: When you were in high school, did you work any part-time jobs?

JM: Yes, I did. I worked for Carvel Ice Cream. I got fired [from] that job because I didn't know how to make change. [laughter] Yes, there was a Carvel in Piscataway, and a friend of mine's family owned it. So, I worked there for maybe a summer. That didn't last long. I worked for my dad. It's funny, I worked as a little kid. I don't know if he paid me. I can't remember if he paid me or if it was just because I wanted to do it. I would hand out keys to the students who were coming in for their dorm rooms. Every--I guess it was--Labor Day weekend, I would be with the college kids, and I just thought I was the coolest in the whole world because I was just hanging out with all these college kids. They would adopt me, and I thought I was so grown up. We'd have a box with these little manila envelopes and they would have the room number, and it'd be which Quad they were in. I remember doing it when he was at Livingston. I think I might have been too young at the other campus. He would buy beer for the students and Tastee Subs. I remember we would get subs, and it was awesome. Yes, so I did that. Then, I ended up working in the housing [office] part time. That was more in college, but I did that for a while. When I was in high school, I think I worked at a hotel, a motel, off of Stelton Road that was kind of sleazy. I was very naive back then. [I] babysat a little bit for a psychologist, and then I babysat for my mom's therapist. My mom had the worst boundaries in the world. She would somehow always manage to make friends with her therapist. I guess it's more on the therapist than my mom, but I ended up babysitting for him. [laughter] Yes, that would be my jobs, babysitting and Carvel.

KR: As you were approaching high school graduation, what were your family's expectations for you regarding college, and what was your college search like?

JM: None, none. My parents, at that time, I think they were completely wrapped up in their own shit, and I don't remember anything. There was no search. I took the SATs. I remember not scoring that great. I remember applying to Rutgers. I don't remember applying anywhere else. We never made any visits. I don't even know if people did that back then. They must have, because a lot of the kids that I went to high school with went to Michigan, Harvard, Tulane, lots of places. These kids that I grew up with were smart. I have to work through that, I think. I

have a little bit of a resentment about that because I feel like maybe Rutgers wasn't necessarily the [best fit for me], and then I didn't even get in. So, I don't know where I would have gone, but we did not have a discussion. It just was Rutgers, that was it, probably because at that time my dad was still working at Rutgers and he would have gotten free tuition. So, that may have been a reason why, but I don't remember ever having a discussion about it. Then, I got in and then he eventually lost his job, but the good news is that Columbia also offered a half price or something. So, he got something from Columbia too to send me to school.

KR: You started at Livingston in the fall of 1987.

JM: Yes.

KR: What were your first days and weeks like at Livingston College?

JM: Ooh, I don't remember. I really don't remember. Yes, it's so funny. I don't remember what they were like. I think, for me, it definitely was a little bit different. I did not have any overwhelmed feeling. I think I was just full of gratitude. I think I was so happy to not be home, to finally be in college. You have to understand, that's all I wanted; I would go do my homework from high school at the library on College Avenue. I would either get a ride or drive, I don't know how I got there, but I just wanted to be in college so bad. By the time I got to Livingston, it was like, "Well, yes, this is where I'm supposed to be." And I was driven. I think I knew I wanted to get out of Livingston, too. I remember my first semester taking Richard McCormick's history class, his survey class, and killing it, like, "This is it. I found my niche." I think that was a big part, too. My early experience was like, "All right, I know what I'm doing."

KR: Why did you want to get out of Livingston and go to Rutgers College?

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on recording now.

JM: Okay.

KR: I had asked you why you wanted to leave Livingston College and transfer to Rutgers College.

JM: Ego. I think I had perceived that Livingston was not as good. So, I wanted to graduate from the good [college]; I wanted to graduate from the college I didn't get into. That was the perception back then was that Livingston was not as good as a college, even though we were all taking the same classes. [laughter] It wasn't any different. Yes, that's it. Bottom line, I didn't get in. I didn't want to go to Douglass, I didn't want to go to an all-girls college, and I wanted to feel like it was a prestigious thing.

KR: I am curious, because we interview a lot of people who went to Livingston College, to Rutgers College, to Douglass, and there is always this perception of Livingston College as being less than.

JM: Oh, that's interesting. Okay, so, it wasn't just me.

KR: Right. I went to Rutgers College. I graduated in 2002, and there was still that same perception of Livingston at that time. I always ask people, no matter what college they went to, why was there that perception of Livingston?

JM: Well, I mean, did you read *Caste*, the book *Caste*, by Isabel Wilkerson? [Editor's Note: *Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents* is a 2020 book by Isabel Wilkerson that discusses how the United States has been shaped by a hidden caste system.]

KR: Yes, it is on my bookshelf.

JM: Think about it; I think it was founded in 1969 as, at least our perception, the Black school. It was an urban [college]; that was what we perceived it as, and that was what I was told. So, I felt like somehow that meant that it wasn't as good. That's just the way we thought. That really just exposes a real divide, that we would consider a school that was founded maybe just as a different way of attracting other students, whether they're better or not, but in our minds, in my white mind, they were not as good, and so therefore I didn't want to go there. By the time I was there, it wasn't like that. I don't know. I don't know what the demographics were, but there were a lot of African American students there. In fact, that shaped me, even in the very brief time that I was in school there.

KR: You talked about this survey history class that you took with Richard McCormick. What other classes or professors do you remember when you were in your first couple years at Rutgers?

JM: I'm probably not going to remember names. I remember professor--is it William O'Neill?--he was another history professor. I took a lot of his history classes early on. I remember there were some star history faculty. There was one guy that taught a Vietnam War history survey class. There was Lloyd Gardner. I took so much; I don't know how I ended up taking so many history classes. [Editor's Note: William O'Neill (1935-2016) served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1971 to 2006. Lloyd Gardner is a Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers. He joined the faculty in 1963. Gardner's oral history is a part of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

Somehow, between transferring from Livingston to Rutgers, I got away with--I never took a foreign language. I never took any math. I barely took any science. My husband cracks up, when he's just like, "You act like you went to such a great school. You never even took a physics or calculus." I'm like, "No, nothing." I took a math class that was called "Math for Liberal Arts Students" and I got a "C" and that was the only math class I took.

I remember my first semester, there were some kids that--I say kids now, we were all freshmen--we took an English--I think I had placed out of "English 101"--maybe it was like a 102 class, and the guy who taught it was gay. He had a crush on this guy that was one of my dormmates who was not yet willing to admit that he was gay. I remember watching that little romance going on, and I remember we all went to the Museum of Modern Art as a field trip. We maybe had read

something, and then he wanted to take us to see some Monet paintings or something. That stood out to me. I never had that kind of experience. That was really cool. I had been to museums and my dad was an artist and I loved museums, but I remember feeling like that was a pretty cool class. There's probably others, but early on--you asked for the first two years--those would be the ones from my first two years.

KR: Was it Richard McCormick's class that convinced you to be a history major? Was there anything else that came into play?

JM: I would say absolutely his class. Yes, without a doubt. He was just so great. He was just fantastic. Did you ever have him?

KR: No. He must have been retired by the time I was at Rutgers College, and then right after I graduated was when his son came back and was president.

JM: No, no, no, no, I'm talking about him.

KR: Oh, you had the junior?

JM: Yes, yes.

KR: Oh, okay.

JM: Yes, I had junior who was president, yes.

KR: Oh, so you had him when he was teaching at Rutgers College. I understand. [Editor's Note: Richard L. McCormick served as a professor of history at Rutgers from 1976 to 1992. During that time, he also served as the dean of the Faculty of Arts and Sciences from 1989 to 1992. He later served as the Rutgers University president from 2002 to 2012. His father, Richard P. McCormick, served as a professor of history at Rutgers from 1945 to 1982. He was the dean of Rutgers College from 1974 to 1977.]

JM: Oh, yes. He may have even been head of the department at that time. Oh, no, the father was ancient. How old do you think I am? [laughter]

KR: I do not know when Richard McCormick senior retired, but he was there a long time.

JM: Yes, he was not there when I was there. I'm so glad we clarified that. Yes, I guess his son went by Dick, but I was trying to be formal. I remembered his father from the pool because he and his wife would go to the pool. I remember there was that generation of retired faculty that would go to the pool, and they were ancient. He was probably sixty-five, which is not ancient, but to my nine-year-old eyes, he was ancient.

Yes, Dick McCormick was my professor, was the dean, maybe, of Rutgers College, if I'm trying to remember correctly, and then he left. He left while I was in school and then went to wherever he went out west, to Washington or whatever. Then, Jim Reed became dean of Rutgers College,

and he was my advisor for my honors thesis. Again, Dick McCormick was the reason why I decided to go in that direction. [Editor's Note: From 1992 to 1995, Richard L. McCormick served as the vice chancellor and provost at the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill. Then, from 1995 to 2002, he served as the president of the University of Washington. James Reed is a Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers. He was active in the faculty from 1975 to 2013.]

KR: Did you have McCormick for one class or more than one class? Do you remember?

JM: I just had him for that one class. I'd have to look at his timeline; I think he left not that much longer after. I don't know, but, yes, I only had him for that one class, that survey class. Then, I just was ready to dig in deeper into more 20th century history. That was really my interest, was more 20th century military and contemporary history.

KR: Who were some of your other professors that you had in history?

JM: I'd have to look at the list. I feel like I had a lot of them. It's funny, I don't remember there being very many women. I looked at the History Department yesterday; I was looking up something for my purposes. I was so interested in how diverse the department is now, and it was not that way when I was in school. I would say it was probably mostly men. I didn't take one class with a woman in history. I probably did in some of the other areas but not very many. It's changed a lot. Yes, I can't remember; I think I named a lot of the professors I already had. I know I took William O'Neill a couple of times. I probably took Lloyd Gardner a couple of times. There was a guy that taught Greek history. That was like my senior year. I decided to take Greek history and I really liked him, but I don't remember his name.

KR: Was he older?

JM: It's hard to say.

KR: Was it Charanis? [Editor's Note: The person being referred to is most likely Thomas J. Figueira, Distinguished Professor of Classics and Ancient History, who has taught at Rutgers since 1979. Peter Charanis served on the history faculty from 1963 until his retirement in 1976. He passed away in 1985.]

JM: No, I don't remember. He had a beard, but I don't remember.

KR: Did you ever have John Chambers as a history professor? [Editor's Note: John Whiteclay Chambers II is a Professor Emeritus of History at Rutgers. He joined the Rutgers faculty in 1982 and retired in 2017. He is Honorary Chair Emeritus of the Rutgers Oral History Archives Academic Advisory Board.]

JM: Yes. Yes, he taught a class maybe on McCarthyism or he taught a post-World War [II] 20th century class. Maybe he wrote a book. He was great. He was fantastic. Yes, he may have been my second favorite professor.

KR: Yes, he was my thesis advisor, and I am still close with him. I interviewed him this past summer.

JM: Oh, I love it. I love it. Yes. Oh, that's fantastic. That's so great. Rudy--what was Rudy's last name? [Editor's Note: Rudolph "Rudy" Bell served as a history professor at Rutgers from 1968 to 2020. He passed away in 2022. His oral history resides in the collection of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

KR: Bell.

JM: Bell, yes. Rudy Bell was one of my professors. He was a kook. I liked him. It's sad. I saw so many of these guys--of course, they passed away. They were old when I was in school, so people don't live forever. Oh, that's cool that you interviewed him. Did you interview Dick McCormick?

KR: Yes, he has been interviewed by the project, and so has Rudy Bell.

JM: And he just passed away.

KR: He did. He just passed away, yes. I also had Professor Reed when I was an undergrad and absolutely loved his class, but I did not know him one on one. It was a huge class. What was Dr. Reed like? What did you do your honors thesis on? Tell me about that.

JM: He was dean of the college at that time. I don't think I ever actually took a class of his, but something made me ask him to serve as my advisor. Maybe someone told me to talk to him, because I think he was a social historian, if I remember correctly. [Editor's Note: James Reed served as the dean of Rutgers College from 1985 to 1994.]

My topic was [Alma Bridwell White]. There was a religious sect outside of Bound Brook, New Jersey, not that close to where I grew up but not that far, across the river. I was learning about the 1920s, anti-Catholicism, anti-Jewish resurgence of the Ku Klux Klan, and she was a proponent of that and used her church, called the Pillar of Fire, to advocate for xenophobic things. [Editor's Note: Alma Bridwell White (1862-1946) was a religious leader of the Pillar of Fire, an evangelical sect of Pentecostalism. After 1907, Pillar of Fire was based in Zarephath, located in Somerset County, New Jersey.]

I don't know how I found her. I can't remember, but I had so much fun doing that. Again, one of those times in my life that really stands out to me, it was really important. I remember working in the building, in a little locked computer lab, which, back then, there weren't really any [computers]. That was a big deal, to be able to use a computer, because I know I didn't have a computer in 1990. Yes, it was really cool, and so he was my advisor.

What he was like--I would visit him in his office, in the dean's office, which I think I felt really important, like this was kind of cool. He was great. He was from the South. I think he was from Texas. He kind of had like more of a southern way, now looking back. The fact that he took time out of his time to do that for a student meant a lot to me. He handed me my diploma when

we graduated. I remember--this is my personality--I remember I was just nervous; I kissed him on the lips. I think he handed me the diploma, and I kissed him. [laughter] I don't think he minded, I don't know. Anyway, that was funny. I stayed in touch with him for a little while afterwards.

Looking back--and I don't know if it was the time--I'm really surprised no one encouraged me to stick with it. Nobody was like, "Hey, maybe this is something you should keep doing. Think about graduate school." Just like with my parents, I didn't have that champion. That wasn't really his role. He didn't see it that way, but I feel a little bit like that might have been a missed opportunity for me. I chose a different path and I don't regret it. I think graduate school in history would have been an interesting choice, but I never gave it any serious thought.

KR: Shifting away from academics, more into campus life, what was the campus climate like in terms of activism during your years there?

JM: Okay, so, there was activism for sure. I remember taking part in things, and I don't even know what I was taking part in. I remember they took over the dean's office. I can't remember why, but I remember being there, liking that idea. I think the college was okay with that. I think that was just a tradition at that [campus]. Nowadays, that never would be tolerated. I don't know about Rutgers, but here, no way. There, if students wanted to take over the dean's office for the night and protest labor practices or whatever, they let us do it. It was really interesting. So, I remember that. I remember--what was his name, the poet, Baraka? Is that his name, Amiri Baraka? [Editor's Note: Amiri Baraka (1934-2014) was a poet, playwright and political activist based largely in Newark, New Jersey. Baraka taught at Rutgers as a visiting professor in the English Department. After Baraka was denied tenure in 1990, there were student-led protests on campus calling for the university to give him a permanent position.]

KR: Yes, Amiri Baraka.

JM: Yes, I remember he would come and protest some things. A lot of it had to do with wages and union stuff, and that was going on. So, yes, there were things going on. You had mentioned Jim Dale. I don't remember the LGBTQ stuff. That wasn't my thing back then, so I wasn't aware of any of that. In terms of race relations, again, that didn't seem like something that was on my radar. But, yes, there was activism. [Editor's Note: James Dale is an alumnus of Rutgers College, Class of 1993. While an undergraduate, he served as co-president of the Rutgers University Lesbian/Gay Alliance. Dale was a plaintiff in a discrimination suit involving the Boy Scouts that went to the U.S. Supreme Court (*Boy Scouts of America v. Dale*, 2000). His oral history resides in the collection of the Rutgers Oral History Archives.]

KR: I am curious, do you remember any homophobia on campus? During that time, there were some blatant incidents of homophobia that got some decent press.

JM: Really? I didn't know that. That's horrible. I didn't know that. No, I was not really involved in any of that, so I don't know.

KR: How about feminism? Do you remember any feminist activism on campus, for example, the Take Back the Night rallies, things like that?

JM: [No]. It's horrible, because all of that is so important to me now, and really, as a graduate student, when I was here at Georgia, yes, I was very involved in those things. As an undergrad, I guess I was just in my own little bubble. Yes, I was not aware of any of that, sad to say. If I had been aware, I probably would have been more involved, but I was not, I guess, running in the right circles.

KR: I looked through the Rutgers yearbooks from the years that you were at Rutgers. Over and over again in the yearbooks from '87 to '91, it talks about housing shortages at Rutgers, and then it also talks about the lottery system that the students had to go through. Did you ever experience difficulty in finding housing? Did you have to go through the lottery process? How did that work for you?

JM: No, because I worked there. I was friends with the director of housing. She literally would be like, "Where do you want to live?" and I would say, "Maybe this year I want to live in Silvers Apartments." I could pick and choose where I wanted to go. That was just the way it was. I knew people. I worked there. I was part of all of that because I remember students having to live three to a room. The rooms were only meant for two students, and you'd have three people living there. Then, they would try to slowly move people out, as space became available, but I do remember that. I also was an RA [resident advisor]. So, I didn't have to worry about that kind of stuff. [Editor's Note: Silvers Apartments are garden-style apartments for undergraduate students on the Busch Campus.]

KR: What was it like for you being an RA?

JM: It was fine. I could have been better. I wasn't the best RA. I think I totally took it for granted. I got to do it for three years. That's a long time. I liked the power. [laughter] I liked that kind of stuff. I think towards the end, my senior year, I probably shouldn't have done it. My senior year, I was starting to wig out a little bit about my future and really didn't have time to deal with other people's issues. I became much more concerned about what the hell was I going to do. I was drinking a lot more then. So, I made some questionable choices. I would say that, really, probably, I shouldn't have had that position, but for the first year or so, I really liked it. It was nice to be part of something bigger than myself. It was great. I liked it. I liked working for the housing department more than I liked being an RA.

Talking about activism, I just want to go back and say that my friends at the housing office, besides the one who lives in San Francisco, were both African American. We were close, but they lived a very different life on campus than I did. I remember sitting in the dining hall; the dining hall was segregated pretty much. I mean, in both Brower Commons and Davidson Dining Hall, there was a side where most of the African American students ate and then a side where they weren't. I would usually sit with my friends who sat on the African American side. I don't know if people talk about that, but that was a real thing. So, that's not activism, but it was just an education.

KR: What about the dorms in that regard?

JM: I don't really remember, honestly, because I lived in a suite when I lived in Morrow, and it was pretty racially diverse, the suite that I lived in. Then, we chose to live again together the next year, but I could see easily how that could happen. But I didn't have any experience with any issues with racism or anything.

KR: Give me a sense of what your life was like as a student. What was it like going to Rutgers between '87 and '91? What would an average day be like? What did you do for fun? What were the big things going on, on campus?

JM: That's such a great question. It depended on where I lived, for sure. I remember my freshman year a lot of it was waiting for buses. The buses that would service Livingston were the oldest buses. I remember thinking, "Well, this sucks." They were the buses that had the worst bus fumes. I can't remember the letter of that bus, the D bus maybe. So, I remember spending a lot of time taking the bus to class, a lot of walking to classes, eating from the Grease Trucks, getting a lot of food from there. I worked always, so I always was working at the housing office. When I was at Livingston, that was my experience.

Parties in the dorms. I was not an RA my first year, and I got written up for drinking in the dorm. There were a lot of parties. Did I go to fraternity parties then? I probably did. My boyfriend was in a fraternity, so I spent a lot of time over there.

Then, pretty much the same the rest of the time, but more and more, I was into the academic side. I really loved my classes. I loved spending time at the library. I loved writing. It was just a balance between that kind of stuff. I loved getting good grades. I loved checking my grades at the end of the semester because they weren't on computers.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back recording. You were talking about checking grades.

JM: Yes, I loved going to the faculty's office door. Did you guys have to do that? Probably not, but yes. You didn't have anything on the computer, so you would go to the door and they would list, by your number, your student number, what your grade was or what your grade on the final exam was or whatever. That was always fun. [laughter] I was just a little bit of an overachiever. I went from being such a loser in school to such an overachiever. I did party a lot. I drank a lot. I spent a lot of time at my boyfriend's fraternity until we broke up. Then, I met another guy, and then we were together for a really long time, even after graduation, but then I didn't go to fraternity parties after that.

What else? Buses were a huge part of my life. I hated them so much, and they made me so nauseous that I would ride my bike from Busch Campus to work. I worked in the housing office in Clothier Hall on College Avenue Campus. So, I would ride my bike the same route that I would do when I was a little kid playing around on campus. I would cut through Busch Campus and the science buildings and then make my way down to Johnson's Park and then ride my bike

up the Albany Street Bridge and cut across, and so I did that every day. I was in great shape back then.

I should also mention, summers I would not go home, because I was just like, "I'm not ever going back there." So, I would work on campus in the summers, too. I would live in the dorms and worked for the housing office in the summers. I lived in Demarest for a summer out of a garbage bag. All my clothes were just in a garbage bag. I lived on Cook Campus one summer. I was all over the university, except Newark. I was never in Newark. I actually was there once and then I was in Camden never, but I wouldn't ever go there. [Editor's Note: Demarest Hall is a residence hall on the College Avenue Campus at Rutgers-New Brunswick.]

KR: You talked about getting your grades by going to your professor's door and seeing the grades posted there. When I was at Rutgers, ten years after you, basically, I would register for classes by phone, and then I would check my grades by phone also.

JM: Oh, interesting.

KR: I am curious, how did you register for classes? Did you have to go do that in person? Do you remember?

JM: Yes, I remember something [about] having to go to the History Department and have them like sign a form. I don't remember where we brought all of that, if we brought it to the business building on Busch Campus, or if we brought it somewhere on College [Avenue]. Yes, I don't remember. I remember always having to get some kind of form signed by my advisor, which was, I guess, over at the History Department. I remember taking exams in the College Avenue Gym, these massive exams in there. That was crazy.

KR: How about big events like Homecoming and Deinerfest? Did you go to those?

JM: Well, Homecoming, I'm sure. It's weird because that was right near the stadium, the Homecoming parade and all that. Yes, maybe I went to some of that. I can't remember, but the game, we would go to it, and I would hang out with the fraternity that was tailgating, maybe make it into the game or not, but most likely never. I never heard of that--what did you call it, Diningfest?

KR: It was called Deinerfest.

JM: Where is that?

KR: Behind one of the River Dorms, there is Deiner Park, and it is spelled D-E-I-N-E-R. [Editor's Note: Deiner Park is located on George Street behind the River Dorms on the College Avenue Campus. Deinerfest, later renamed Rutgersfest, was a day-long music event originally held in Deiner Park and later on Livingston and Busch Campuses. In 2011, President Richard McCormick cancelled Rutgersfest due to large crowds, several shootings, arrests and injuries. Many of those attending were not Rutgers students. The student-run Rutgers University

Programming Association and Department of Student Life had planned Rutgersfest, which was funded by student fees.]

JM: Yes.

KR: And there were concerts. There was a concert festival once a year that brought in some pretty big acts, like the Red Hot Chili Peppers one year. I was just wondering if you happen to remember.

JM: I vaguely remember that happening; I did not go to it. Yes, I vaguely remember that. I remember there being acts at the RAC. I remember there being acts at College Avenue Gym. Some of these I remember from more when I was in high school. I remember I saw Huey Lewis and the News, but that was in 1984 and I was a freshman in high school. I remember R.E.M. played there. I don't remember going; I just remember hearing about it. Did you know that the band that played that song "Brandy" is from New Brunswick, who went to Rutgers?

KR: Yes, remind me of the singer's name.

JM: Oh, I was afraid you were going to say that. It's a band. It's a band, and I just looked them up because it was on the radio. I was bragging to my friends about it, like, "You know, they're from Rutgers." Then, The Smithereens too. [Editor's Note: The Smithereens were a rock band that were active in the New Brunswick music scene in the 1980s and 1990s.]

KR: Sure.

JM: The band was called Looking Glass. [laughter] From Rutgers, one hit wonder. [Editor's Note: Looking Glass was a pop-rock band that was established at Rutgers-New Brunswick in 1969. Their 1972 song "Brandy (You're a Fine Girl)" was a number one hit.]

KR: You talked about going to the memorial service for Ruth Ellen Bloustein. Do you remember much about when President Bloustein died?

JM: No. When did he die? I don't remember.

KR: He died in '89, and she died the year before, in '88. You would have been in college when he died.

JM: Yes.

KR: I am just curious if that was a big thing to students.

JM: It was a big thing for me when she passed because we were close to her. I don't remember him passing. When was the college at Livingston named for him? That must have been after that. [Editor's Note: The Edward J. Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy was established in 1992.]

KR: The Bloustein School of Planning and Public Policy. At some point in the '90s, maybe around 1993, it was named for him. That had its origins at Livingston College, yes.

JM: Right, right. I don't remember. I was probably just way too wrapped up in my own stuff.

KR: What other recollections do you have of your years at Rutgers? What did we skip over?

JM: Oh, my gosh, I don't know. You have been incredibly thorough. It's fascinating to be asked these questions. I can't think of anything; I really can't. What was the food like? [laughter] It was pretty bad. [laughter] You covered so, so much. It's not a time in my life that I look back on that often. When I was approached by the alumni person here just randomly, it was such an odd connection. She mentioned this. I remember the oral history project; I knew of what you guys were doing. I was very honored that she would even think that this might be of interest to you, so very cool.

KR: You told the story about graduation and Dr. Reed handing you the diploma.

JM: Yes.

KR: What else do you remember about graduation? Do you remember any of the traditions, the Rutgers College traditions?

JM: Traditions, I don't know. Well, let me just tell you this. This was my experience, whether or not this was part of the traditions or not. I remember gathering on Old Queens. I remember being with my best friend, the one I just saw in San Francisco. I remember Avery--oh, what was his last name? Avery was our keynote speaker. He was a Mason Gross alum, and he was starring in a hit TV show.

KR: Is it Brooks? [Editor's Note: Avery F. Brooks is an actor and educator known for his roles in *Spenser: For Hire*, *Star Trek: Deep Space Nine*, and *A Man Called Hawk*. He graduated from Livingston College in 1973 and then earned a Master of Fine Arts from the Mason Gross School of the Arts in 1976.]

JM: Yes, he was starring in a hit TV show, and he was our speaker. I remember getting there way too early to make sure my family got a front-row seat. When I say early, I think we were there like four hours early, and that was pretty funny. I remember being very excited. Did we walk through the gate? Was there something to do with the gate? That seems to register with me. I can't remember. I remember it being just a really, really, really special day. I remember we did it on campus. It wasn't in the stadium or anything. We sat outside, and it was a beautiful day. [Editor's Note: As a tradition, Rutgers College graduates would march through the Class of 1902 Memorial Gateway on Old Queen's Campus towards their graduation ceremony on Voorhees Mall to symbolize that they are leaving the college.]

Then, the History Department had a little party, a little table setup. I remember going to that and seeing that professor who taught me the Greek history classes and him saying to me--this is how important these things are, these messages that these faculty members--they don't understand

how important this stuff--well, they do--he said to me, "You were such a delight to have in my class because you always made eye contact with me. When I was talking, you just seemed like you were really taking it all in," and I was like, "I was!" I just remember thinking, "God, they actually notice," the give and take between a faculty member, and I remember thinking that was really cool. [laughter] Then, I remember my best friend and I had a joint graduation dinner. We had been in nursery school together, and we're still friends. She went to engineering and got a real job, and I was completely lost for two years, until I went to grad school. That's what I remember. I don't remember that much more. I remember the dean handing out the diplomas and the kiss and Avery Brooks.

KR: I am going to pause for one second.

JM: Sure.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: Okay, we are back on recording. What came next for you after graduation?

JM: [laughter] Shock and awe. I literally was like, "I don't know what I'm supposed to do now." I didn't know what I was going to do. I worked for a little bit. I had this boyfriend; he had graduated from the graduate program in psychology, applied psychology. He was working in Brooklyn. Long story short, I ended up moving to New Orleans. I did not have an idea of what I wanted to do, and he was moving to take a job with, of all people, Masters and Johnson. Do you remember who Masters and Johnson are? They used to do research on sex. This is interesting, at that time, in our history, the whole idea of satanic rituals was a big thing. He was going down to this center to help people that were surviving trauma of being victims of satanic ritual abuse, which history has not treated exactly like that actually was a thing. [Editor's Note: William H. Masters and Virginia E. Johnson were clinical researchers in the field of human sexuality from the 1960s until the 1990s. They operated the Masters & Johnson Institute in St. Louis, authored the influential *Human Sexual Response* (1966), and offered clinical counseling. The Masters & Johnson Treatment Center for Trauma Based Disorders, Sexual Compulsivity, and Eating Disorders is based at River Oaks Psychiatric Hospital in New Orleans.]

Anyway, I moved to New Orleans. [laughter] I worked with him for a little while doing some data entry, whatever. I eventually made my way to the New Orleans Museum of Art, and I was a grant writer. I just literally answered a classified ad to write grants to support the New Orleans Museum of Art, and I fell in love with that. I fell in love with working at an art institution and writing for financial support to bring these exhibitions to New Orleans, and that kind of set me on a totally different path. The boyfriend and I broke up.

I had deferred my admission---even while I was at Rutgers, I had applied to graduate school at the University of Georgia, thinking historic preservation might be an idea to consider. I loved history, and I loved architecture. We talked about New Brunswick and my love for the town, and a lot of that had to do with the richness of our history. I think living on that location near the President's House and living near all of that history on River Road, all that stuff was just a part of me. It was an option, but I deferred because I was too scared to move away and break up with

the boyfriend. Well, eventually, the boyfriend kind of was like, "I think it's time," and that's how I ended up in Athens. I worked at the museum here writing grants to support myself while I was getting my master's degree and met my husband, who also has a master's in historic preservation, and did that for a while. I moved back to Louisiana and lived in Baton Rouge. I worked for a state historic preservation nonprofit. I worked at the High Museum for a little while. That got us back to Georgia, which--you think Georgia seems backwards? You should move to Louisiana. It's really bad. Now, I'm here.

Long story short, it's kind of boring, but I just ended up in fundraising. It just became a thing that I really enjoy. I like supporting the areas that we teach here at this college [College of Environment and Design at the University of Georgia]. I'm back where I got my master's degree, in historic preservation and landscape architecture and urban planning. I feel like, yes, I'm not using my history degree, but I did, I got my master's. That certainly helped, and I can certainly talk to potential donors and understand about not just history from the sense of what we learned at Rutgers but also architectural and cultural landscape history, which is pretty interesting, too.

[RECORDING PAUSED]

KR: We are back on and recording. How do you think that development work and fundraising has changed and evolved over the course of your career?

JM: Well, right off the bat--again, this is only really from my experience here at the University of Georgia; I've been here for twenty-two years now, which is a long time--I've seen a lot of changes. I think there's definitely, within the last couple of years, much more of an attempt at equity and diversity. I really do feel like that's something that they're trying to address. Whether or not they're successful, I don't know; it's still maybe a little too early to tell. We're not as diverse a university here as I would like to see, but I think that is changing. It's not Rutgers. [laughter] It's definitely different. Then, from fundraising, here, it's just been more targeted, really working a lot harder assigning more metrics to how we look at fundraising. What else? It's just changed as people have come and go. I've been here a really long time now. It's much younger.

I interviewed for a fundraising job actually at Rutgers several years ago. I got recruited, and I was like, "Oh, why not? I'll go check it out." I think Rutgers is definitely a little more sophisticated in some ways, and then we're catching up here. Georgia's like ten years behind everything else. [laughter] I'm not answering that question. I don't know. I mean, it's hard to say. I just think here, internally, things have gotten a lot better as better people have been hired and more diverse people have been hired.

KR: Technology wise, when you started in 2000, probably a lot of the fundraising mailings would have been just paper mailings, and now, everything would be a lot more electronic.

JM: Good point, yes, absolutely. I think the jury is still out actually as to which is more appealing, depending on the donors that you're working with. There's still people who really like getting just something that they can hold on to and look at. Then, there's people like me that just want to rattle off an online gift really fast before I forget. We use email a lot more than we

would have used it twenty years ago to connect with donors. But, with that said, at our little college, I would say we only have half of the active alumni emails, because people move, they change, they don't necessarily update their information with the university. Yes, technology definitely has changed and also our ability to dig deeper and research people's ability to give and who they're giving to and all that kind of secret stuff that you don't know that we do behind the scenes.

KR: On that topic, somebody who works in a different profession, somebody outside of the development field, what would an outsider think is surprising about development work?

JM: So many people say to me, "I could never do what you do. Oh, my God, you have to ask people for money? Ugh, I could never do what you do. I don't know how you do it." I typically will say, "Well, actually, most of the time, I don't really have to ask. It's so much more about the relationships and doing my homework." Like you doing your homework before you came to talk with me, it's the same thing. That's a courtesy that I could provide somebody, is to do a little bit of homework before I talk to them. My job is really just to align people's interests with what we have going on here. I guess I've been doing it long enough that either that's going to work or it's not. I think people are kind of surprised by that, that it's not about asking; it's about developing relationships and letting some of this stuff form naturally.

KR: Do you get to travel a lot for your job?

JM: Yes. I could travel more if I wanted to. Certainly, with COVID, that stopped. I need to get back out and travel. I think there's plenty of opportunity for me to do that. When I was younger, I traveled much more. Now that I'm older, I don't necessarily travel as much. We've got other kind of remote regional people that do a lot of the traveling. I travel a lot in state--well, mostly to Atlanta. I do a lot of Atlanta stuff. Then, that trip to San Francisco, that's like a once-a-year thing where we go to a big conference. We have pockets of alums in different regions. The bulk of the alums for Rutgers are in New Jersey, but there may be a pocket in New York City or in California or whatever. We're the same way. Our pockets are in different regions, and so I kind of target those. I'm not going to Idaho; I'm going to D.C. or New York, which is why I get to sometimes go to New Brunswick. If I'm in New York, I'll try and take the train over.

KR: I want to ask you about the pandemic. Thinking back to February and March 2020, what was your life like, and how did things change for you in the spring of 2020 when the pandemic hit?

JM: Great question, to archive that. I had an eight-year-old at the time, and we were in Disney. We had actually done our first Disney trip. The spring break was the week before everything shut down. We came back that Sunday from Orlando. We had stopped in Macon, Georgia, which is a little bit more than halfway, and got toilet paper because we had heard on the news that they were already running out of toilet paper. So, we did that, and we never went back to work. We never went back to work. My daughter Grace went remote eventually. I can't remember how much time it took. She goes to a very small school, a Montessori School, and they--God bless them--figured out how to do it, but it was not easy. Then, we just stayed home.

Unlike other states, our governor wanted us to get back to work right away. I can't remember exactly when Governor Kemp told us to come back, but it was much sooner than most of you all. Let's say we worked remote until that summer, and then I think we were expected to come back. I wanted to come back. I didn't want to stay home and we stayed home as much as we could when Grace was there, but the world kind of got back here at Georgia maybe by September. We were just wearing masks. Campus was remote, I believe, that first semester. The semester of 2020 was definitely remote, and then we maybe went to hybrid after that. It's weird how it's already kind of fuzzy. [Editor's Note: Brian Kemp has served as the Governor of Georgia since 2019.]

KR: Fall of 2020 was hybrid?

JM: No, that was remote.

KR: Oh, okay. In 2021, it became a hybrid, okay.

JM: Yes. Then, by the fall of '21, I think everybody was back. Yes, and I definitely was back. Now, there are still people, staff people, that were able to negotiate--I'm guessing like your situation--they work from home. I could. My husband does it. I can't work from home, so I've been here since the beginning pretty much.

KR: In the spring of 2020, I had an eight-year-old at home doing schooling.

JM: Ah.

KR: What was that like for you? What was that like for your child? What was that adjustment like? I remember my child did not even have a Chromebook when the pandemic hit.

JM: Oh, no.

KR: We bought one eventually, but he was using my iPad for his schooling initially.

JM: Yes.

KR: What was that like for you making that adjustment?

JM: It's so funny, I think my attitude was really just like, "It is what it is. What are we going to do? This is where we are with this." Her teachers all live out in the country. They're like all these hippie-dippy Montessori teachers with very bad internet connection. They would have classes, and halfway through, the class would just break apart. Then, you'd have all these kids, and they were screaming. In Montessori, there were six-year-olds in the class. How do you manage a six-year-old? It was horrible. I think we just did what we had to do. A lot of it was they would email us assignments. A lot of it was just stuff that we had to work with.

My husband also works for UGA, and so we were just both very fortunate that we worked for areas of the university that were not putting [on] us any kind of pressure. We just didn't do

anything. How could I fundraise? Although, we did pretty good fundraising. I'm a little surprised, but we did fine, considering. We just did everything online. She didn't have a Chromebook either. I don't know what she used. She must have just used the spare computer, but they didn't do a lot of online because the teachers couldn't get internet. [laughter] It was horrible. [laughter] I was grateful we weren't sick. My mom was sick at that time, and so it was just not a good time. I'm glad to be past it, knock on wood.

KR: Having gone through the pandemic, has your job at the University of Georgia changed? Has the pandemic changed the way you do your job?

JM: Yes. They measured us all the time on these metrics. They measured us a lot in terms of these face-to-face visits, like you had to have face to face [meetings], and they still do that. You're supposed to get out and meet people and have these visits face to face, and I'm evaluated on that. But there are so many other subtle ways that you could have connection with people, and I think the pandemic showed that. I can close a gift over email. I can have a Zoom meeting, like we're doing right now, and talk about gifts. I text people all the time. I think that fundraising is finally turning a little bit where they realize that there are other means of communication.

Certainly, meetings have changed. We don't all have to go file into a room and meet. We can do this on Zoom. In terms of people's giving, I raised my largest gift. I raised a five-million-dollar gift during the pandemic. A lot of it was because it was a woman in Dallas, she lived in Dallas, and she told me about this intent to make this gift. Then, the pandemic hit, and then we couldn't meet. She owned a cheese business. So, I had to buy cheese. I would go online and buy all this cheese and then email her and tell her how much I loved her mozzarella. I kept in contact with her that way. Then, eventually, when she got her vaccinations, she came East and signed her forms, and it was for five million dollars. Would that have happened if I had not bought the cheese? Probably. I don't know, but it makes a good story.

KR: While other people were baking bread, you were eating cheese.

JM: [laughter] I was buying cheese from Dallas. [laughter] I baked some bread, too, to go with the cheese. [laughter] Look, you do what you've got to do. I think that really does show people are so resilient, and our children are resilient. My daughter, I think she did okay. We'll see. Time will tell. How is your child?

KR: Yes, my son is good. My daughter is older. She just started high school, so she was in sixth grade when the pandemic began. She was a little older and had her fundamentals down. I think my younger child is harder hit by the pandemic and learning loss, but he is doing well.

JM: Good.

KR: I have two last questions for today.

JM: Okay.

KR: One you have touched upon in various parts of your responses. How do you think overall Rutgers shaped you?

JM: That's a big question. I think it shaped me in that I knew that if I worked hard enough, I could achieve great things. Those were things like, for better or for worse, wanting to get out of Livingston, and wanting to excel in the major that I had chosen for myself, wanting to connect with faculty and not be afraid of that. I see that in a big university like Georgia. Finding the dean of the college and making him my advisor, that took a little bit of chutzpah. I think the fact that that could happen enabled me and empowered me to have a lot more confidence and to know that I could do things and I could do great things.

I wish I had learned some math and science and a foreign language [laughter], but at the time, I was just skating by and I wasn't going to make waves. I do wish that I had had a little more guidance, but I think I would have had to seek that out and I sought it out in different ways. From an academic standpoint, it was outstanding. From a cultural standpoint, I probably didn't take advantage of as much as I probably could have. I think things may be different now. I think there's more opportunities, at least from what I can see here. I didn't do that. I'm talking more about what I regret rather than what I got, but I got a whole lot. I wouldn't have changed it. I love that university; I really do. It's also because it's so for me, of who I was even before I was a student. It's in my blood.

KR: What else would you like to add for today?

JM: Nothing really. Like I said earlier, I feel like you covered everything. I can't possibly think of what else to touch on. I recently noticed the University of Illinois was doing an oral history thing. Are you familiar with that? But I swear, I think it's more of like a fundraising thing. It's different. When I told some people that I was doing this, they were like, "Oh, that's just a fundraising thing. Illinois is doing that," and I was like, "I don't think so." I'm like, "This is like an institute or a center at the university." I would love for you to distinguish yourself from that, because I don't think that's what you guys are doing. I think what you're doing is better and more important. [Editor's Note: In 2022, the University of Illinois Alumni Association began its Oral History Project. In partnership with Publishing Concepts, the alumni association plans to release a book that includes all recorded oral histories collected in 2023. The book will be made available to the public for purchase.]

KR: Yes, many of the Big Ten universities have really distinguished oral history programs. I am not specifically familiar with Illinois' program. I will look into it. [Editor's Note: Founded in 1994, the Rutgers Oral History Archives (ROHA) is a center affiliated with the Department of History in the Rutgers School of Arts and Sciences. The mission of ROHA is to document the oral histories of people in communities throughout Rutgers University and New Jersey and to educate students in the methodology and practice of oral history. ROHA is a separate entity from the various alumni associations and development offices at Rutgers.]

JM: Okay.

KR: Yes. For example, Rutgers Athletics is starting an oral history project, and it is purely fundraising. So, it happens.

JM: This is off topic of me, but we're looking at wanting to interview, as our former faculty and emeritus faculty, are aging and dying, we want to take advantage of that opportunity to talk with them. Do you have any kind of best practices, or how do you do what you do? I think it's really fascinating.

KR: Yes, sure. I can share with you some guidelines for setting up a life-course interview, and then I will share with you links to faculty that my project has interviewed.

JM: I would love that. Yes, we've lost several faculty who were just really key in the history of this college. At a recent faculty meeting, someone was like, "We need to do something here, or we're going to lose this," which is why I went on the website because I noticed you could scroll down and it actually had an in memoriam section on the faculty list. I was like, "That's brilliant."

KR: Yes.

JM: So, yes, other than that, I think this was really interesting, and I thought you asked some incredibly deep and insightful questions. You were obviously listening, and I thought that was really cool.

KR: Well, thank you so much. It has been so interesting talking to you. I appreciate you taking all this time.

JM: Well, I appreciate it, and I look forward to hearing back from you when you've got the transcript.

KR: Sounds good, and I will find out that professor's name for you.

JM: Please. I'll do some digging, too.

KR: Okay, sounds good. I will be in touch soon.

JM: Okay, bye.

KR: Okay, bye, bye.

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

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