

RUTGERS, THE STATE UNIVERSITY OF NEW JERSEY

NEW BRUNSWICK

AN INTERVIEW WITH PETER STECK

FOR THE

RUTGERS ORAL HISTORY ARCHIVES

INTERVIEW CONDUCTED BY

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Molly Graham: This is an oral history interview with Peter Steck for the Rutgers Oral History Archives. The interview is taking place on Sunday, September 18, 2016, in Maplewood, New Jersey, and the interviewer is Molly Graham. I just like to start at the beginning. Could you say when and where you were born?

Peter Steck: I was born just outside of Boston, Massachusetts, on June 19, 1948.

MG: Where outside of Boston?

PS: Malden. It's a small town. I guess it's--I don't even know--west of Boston, yes, but physically born in Massachusetts General Hospital.

MG: Tell me a little bit about your family history and how your family got to the Boston area.

PS: When I was born, my name was longer. It was Steckevecz. Both my parents were Polish. My mother's family grew up in New York Mills, New York, outside of Utica. My grandmother was a prominent figure in New York Mills when they were importing Polish immigrants to work in the cotton mills. My father's family grew up in Nashua, New Hampshire, and half of the family changed their name to Steck, and half kept the Steckevecz name. I was a Steckevecz for one year, and then the name got changed.

MG: Can you talk about the reasons why?

PS: I'm sure it was because of prejudice at the time. An example is my grandmother, who lived to be a hundred-and-one was the subject of a book about the mill strikes because she was one of the people alive at the time they were doing the book. Her parents had a general store. They had picnic grounds, which turned out to be the union organizing grounds. Anyway, when they bought a general store, there were restrictions on selling property to Catholics. So, they got a shill to buy the property and then flipped it to them. So, I'm guessing that, especially my parents were aware of the prejudice partly on being Polish, but partly on being Catholic also. Now I'm sure that that was the motivation for changing the name. [Editor's Note: The novel that Peter Steck is referring to is *United We Stood: The Role of Polish Workers in the New York Mills Textile Strikes, 1912 and 1916*. It was written by James S. Pula and Eugene E. Dziedzic and distributed in 1990 by Columbia University Press in New York.]

MG: What was your mother's maiden name?

PS: Kozak, K-O-Z-A-K.

MG: What was the generation that immigrated over from Poland?

PS: Well, my mother's mother, Bertha Nowicki Kozak, was born in Massachusetts and then moved to New York Mills in New York State in 1900. My father's parents immigrated from Poland. My grandfather, my father's father, for a time worked in the coal mines, I guess in Pennsylvania, but they eventually settled in Nashua, New Hampshire, and there are a number of Stecks that are still there that are somewhat prominent. My cousin happened to marry a guy by

the name of Robert Baines that became the Mayor of Manchester, New Hampshire for a period of time. I have relatives just over in Pelham, New Hampshire, which is on the southern part of New Hampshire and they have a two-hundred-acre farm. They also have an airport. If you Google "Steck Farm Airport," you'll find the federal registration of the airport. So, it's just a grass landing field. They don't have dairy cows anymore, but they're classic New Englanders. They have a lumber mill. They collect their own honey. They do everything on their own. They don't have much use for government. [laughter]

MG: Well, tell me a little bit about how your parents met.

PS: Okay. I think they both wanted to get out of an ethnic neighborhood. So, my father was an avid ham radio operator in Nashua, Massachusetts. He was very much into technology and electronics, and toward the end of the Second World War, he flew airways. He was a radioman for Pan American Airways. My mother came from a family that valued education. So, she went to Yale Nursing School. Toward the end of the war, although they didn't know it was the end of the war, she joined the Navy, and she was sent down to South America to start a training school for flight nurses. So, nurses that would be on the airplane and would take care of the wounded soldiers being brought back to the United States. Anyway, they were in Rio de Janeiro. My father kept a horse down there. It was a rainy day. They met outside of a church. My father offered an umbrella to my mother, and that started things rolling. Apparently, they got married down in Rio, but had a second ceremony in the United States.

MG: Do you know what her motivation for joining the Navy was?

PS: I don't know. I don't know. I think part of it was the times. My uncle was in the Navy and had the Navy as a career. I have another uncle that hated the service. So, it goes both ways. I had an uncle that actually was killed in a plane crash near the Antarctic. In those days, they were flying airplanes for, I guess, monitoring communications from the Soviet Union. He was up flying, I guess maybe near Greenland, but there was a storm that they were in. He was the commander of the plane, but it went down and they never found him for many years. Eventually, I guess, as the snow started melting, there were some researchers that found the plane and found his remains, years and years after. Now there's a website that has Norbert Kozak's name in it, and there's a little group that keeps track of that event. [Editor's Note: The plane of Norbert Kozak went missing in 1962. The remains of the twelve-man crew were found in 2004 and interred at Arlington National Cemetery in 2011.]

MG: Did he have a family?

PS: Yes, he had a wife and three children down in Florida.

MG: It sounds like you have a lot of adventurous family members.

PS: I'd like to think so. [laughter] Yes, part of the family stayed in Nashua, in the area. But again, my father wanted to get out, I think, of an ethnic environment. He was an adventurous person at the time. When they got married, he went to the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and was a metallurgist. Most of his career was in foundries, having to do with

castings. So, they started in the Massachusetts area. He worked for General Electric for a while, which was in Massachusetts. Then when I was, I guess, maybe in third or fourth grade, he got a job in Milwaukee, Wisconsin. That brought me to the Midwest, where I largely grew up in a small municipality called Elm Grove, which is just west of Milwaukee. It's just over the border into Waukesha County. My father bounced on a few jobs there. For a while he was commuting across Lake Michigan to Muskegon, Michigan. Then got another job in Milwaukee. His whole career essentially ended up in Milwaukee. So, I went to grade school, a Catholic grade school there, Saint Mary's after having been imported from a public school in Massachusetts. Then I went to Marquette High School, which is in Milwaukee and then Marquette University. The reason I'm out here in New Jersey is that I applied to some graduate schools. Then they didn't have the Common App, so you applied to a few schools, and I went to one of the schools that let me in, which turned out to be Rutgers. I came out for a planning degree. So, I have a master's in city and regional planning. That's what brought me to New Jersey. I really had very little knowledge of New Jersey at the time. But at the end of school, I got my first job with a consulting firm. The head of the firm happened to be an adjunct professor at Rutgers, and this was when he was teaching on the Kilmer Campus, and still in the old barracks buildings that were there. [Editor's Note: Livingston Campus at Rutgers was originally known as Kilmer Campus. The land for the campus came from the former Army post, Camp Kilmer.]

MG: Was it Livingston at the time?

PS: It was on the Livingston Campus, but it was the old military barracks that were used essentially for the graduate school there. So, I lived in New Brunswick, but took my courses on the Livingston Campus. Again, found my first job with a consultant that had offices in Trenton, and then things progressed from there.

MG: I am curious about the neighborhood your family settled in, in . Were there other Polish or Catholic families there?

PS: A de-ethnicized neighborhood, except there were a lot of Catholics. We were in maybe a couple thousand feet of a Catholic Church that had a population that was growing. I'd say half of the families in the area were Catholic families, could walk to the church and the grade school. I'm obviously a member of the baby boomer generation, so not only were there a lot of kids in general, but because they were Catholics they happen to have larger families. So, it was not unusual, in my neighborhood, to have families with nine kids, with twelve kids, with eight kids. So, it was no problem running around outside with a gang of kids. So, we were part of a newer suburb in Elm Grove that was just growing up. We were the first people to live in our house. There was a vacant lot next to us for many years where you would play with dirt bombs, that kind of thing. It was a classic suburban experience for that time.

MG: Did you have other siblings?

PS: Yes. I have a younger brother, Gary, and an older brother, Jim.

MG: Were you close growing up?

PS: I wouldn't say we were a tightknit family. My brother was a year older, but skipped kindergarten because of his brilliance, and we really never had shared friends at all. He happened to be a naturally very smart person. While I think there are elements of me that approach intelligence, we just had different groups of friends. My younger brother is several years younger, so again, a different kind of break. But it was a family with three boys, and I was the middle and the most regular, the best adjusted child.

MG: [laughter] Did you have any other family members in Wisconsin?

PS: No, we were loners in Wisconsin. So we started in Malden, which is a blue-collar suburb, then moved to Melrose, where--I think I just went to kindergarten. I'm not sure, maybe even before that. But when we moved to Melrose, I was there until, I think, about the third grade. But there were still a lot of family connections. Every Thanksgiving we would go to the farm in Pelham, New Hampshire on Jeremy Hill, and there would be four generations, lots of pies, walking in the woods. It was a classic New England Thanksgiving. So, big holidays we would join the family, my folks being Mavericks; when they moved to the Midwest they were loners. No one else was around, so the connections to the remaining members of the family were intermittent.

MG: Your mother had a degree in nursing. Did she continue to work in that field?

PS: Yes. She didn't work for a while; she was raising us, but in her later years, she worked as a nurse for a convent nursing home associated with Saint Mary's Parish. So, she worked as a nurse in that nursing home for a number of years, and she always used to laugh because she was, toward the end, older than some of the people that she was helping in the nursing home.

MG: Can you describe your parents more? What were they like?

PS: Somewhat unusual, my mother was seven years older than my father. So, that was somewhat of an unusual match. My father was very much of a technician/scientist person. Again, with a background in science, for most of his life, he was a ham radio operator, so he had a room in the house with all the radio equipment. They used to trade postcards. When you connected with someone overseas, at the end of it, you would give them their call letters and address and they would send you [a postcard]. So, he always had a big file of postcards from all around the world of people that he spoke to. He was also very much into his job. Again, very much of a, I would say, scientist, although much of his work, I mentioned, was in the casting industry. When he came to Milwaukee he worked for Wehr Steel. If you happen to like bulldozers and you see on the sprocket a W, at one time Wehr Steel made a lot of sprockets. His specialty was castings. I know he had a patent where he developed a mix of sand for the molds that encouraged an endothermic reaction that absorbed the heat. [Editor's Note: Wehr Steel was founded in 1910. It was bought out in 1986.] So, the finish on the casting would be less rough and would require less machining. Later in life, he did go to the University of Wisconsin for his doctorate, but I'm not sure he ever finished his thesis. I just don't know. I remember vaguely him working on it and taking courses periodically, but I'm not sure he ever got his doctorate. What was nice is that he did get into management toward the end. As I said, while Milwaukee is a geographically-defined ethnic city, there are strict neighborhood boundaries, and having the

name Steck, he could both potentially be Polish, but it sounded German. So, I guess it worked well in the Milwaukee environment. He prided himself on being kind of a neutral plant manager, everyone treated equally. I think that was a hallmark of his management. At the end, which was very good, he started a consulting business, again, in the steel casting industry, and he and my mother got to travel around the world. They went to China. They went to South Korea. They went to Brazil. So, they did get to do some fair amount of travelling toward the end.

My mother was--I'm trying to think of how to say this--I think she was a strict and somewhat nervous person. They were very concerned about the look of their house, being able to entertain. We had the classic living room that you could not sit in except for maybe three times a year. I am less concerned about my house, but the answer is I like nice surroundings too. I think half of the motivation for my parents moving was getting out of the ethnic environment, which I think both my folks thought was constraining, and the other half, they moved into a new suburb. So, the trappings of suburban life, I think, were important to them. My father was a very much of a do-it-yourselfer. Toward the end, he mowed his own lawn, he hung the wires for his ham radio antenna. Every year he would hang it on the telephone pole, and every year they would cut it down, and every year he would put it back up again. He was someone that very much liked to be independent, do things on his own rather than hiring people to do them.

MG: Were there things your family did or food you ate that was uniquely Polish?

PS: Rarely. My mother was not a good cook, but during holidays, we would have pierogi and sausages and some food, but I got the sense that my mother was never much interested in cooking. She liked the name Bird's Eye on the frozen vegetables, et cetera. She was a nurse so she was into dietary issues. She was good at that but I wouldn't put her on the half of the population that's called good cooks.

MG: You brought up the Catholic Church. Did you attend services every Sunday? Were you an altar boy?

PS: You're going right to the core, I see, on this question. I started out in public school so my only contact with the Catholic Church was sitting in some Sunday School in desks that appeared to be six hundred years old that had carvings, and writing on them and ink wells, of course, in the upper right hand corner, and someone else's books underneath. We weren't a very religious family, although we did, as most Catholics did at that time, regularly attend mass and confession and had baptisms and confirmations. My father was not that religious early on. My mother was more the task master in doing the religious functions. There, moving into a Catholic School in Elm Grove, Wisconsin reset the standard because we were in a Catholic parish. I never really participated much in it. Part of it is I didn't have a start in the parish at an early age. What was odd is that when I went to high school, Marquette University was a Jesuit school, I was kind of overshadowed by my brother who was very smart and he was a valedictorian and all that kind of stuff, but once he left the high school I came into my own. I would say that I developed a religious bent, but in the Jesuit style, not a strict constructionist, not a fundamentalist, but religion being important to your life. Oddly enough, when I went to college in Milwaukee at Marquette University, someone needed someone to help out with a mass, so I became a once a month altar boy or something like that, just to maintain some connection. Those were interesting

times because it was during Kent State. [Editor's Note: On May 4, 1970, Ohio National Guardsmen fired on students at Kent State University, killing four and wounding nine others.] My claim to fame is that there was a teaching assistant at Marquette University whose name was Paris Baldacci, and during the 1970's turmoil--I was in engineering school, so I'm not supposed to be that much of a radical. I was a civil engineering student. But this teaching assistant was very much of a rabble-rouser, and he'd get before a group and he would say, "We have all these problems and we can't just stay quiet. See that library over there? That shouldn't be open during this day. What are we going to do about it?" He would ask these questions to incite the crowd, but he would clearly never tell them to do anything. I just got irritated because I thought he was manipulating the crowd. So, in those early days I was the master of the--this was before Xerox machines--mimeograph machine. So one night, I produced a small eight-and-a-half-by-eleven poster that basically said, "Is Paris burning?," referring to Paris Baldacci, playing the game of asking the question, but not doing anything more. I got up at five in the morning, and peppered the campus with this radical communication. Nothing ever happened and I never got arrested or anything, but it was funny. Someone from that group eventually asked me months later, was I the one that put up the posters, and I think I admitted it. I lived in an apartment, but it was during exam time. There were some buildings that were firebombed. It was kind of a disruptive time. The one good that came out of all of this was I was taking a statistics class that I was not doing well in, and because of all the bombing I got to negotiate my grades rather than taking an exam. That was the first time I realized I was a good negotiator.

MG: How did you accomplish that?

PS: I don't know what it is. I picked a good middle ground. Give me a B or whatever it turned out to be, and it worked.

MG: Before you got to college, I am curious about your grammar and high school experience. What subjects were you interested in? What memories stand out from that time period?

PS: I was not a great student in grade school. In high school, it was always expected that I would go to Marquette High School because my brother was there. In grade school, my favorite subject was lunch hour and recreation because we had a group of people that played--I guess it was called--pom-pom. It's a running game that you have two sides and you have to tag the other person and each side gets winnowed away. I had some friends that were good runners. So I always liked athletics, although I was never formally trained and never great, but I liked running around. I was a little hobbyist. I had classic model airplanes and all that, but not a big group of friends. I do have a short career with explosives. In that, I remember, we were into chemistry and all that and we learned how to make gunpowder and one of the ingredients which is hard to get, is saltpeter because you mix that with sulfur and with--what was the other? I forget the other component. Anyway, we rode on our bikes, going into Milwaukee, stopping at every pharmacy. Of course half of them wouldn't sell us anything. Then one pharmacy sold us a package of saltpeter, so we were in seventh heaven. We would build little bombs and put them in model ships, go down to the creek, float them in the creek. We used to get fuses. There were little model airplanes at the time that were balsa wood, and they had little jet engines. We didn't care about the jet engines; we just got the fuses that would light the jet engine. So we would make these little explosives, go down to the creek, blow up models, come back home, make another

one. That was a lot of the activity. So, a nerdy little boy at the time. Not being tall was not necessarily good in athletics or anything like that. When I got into high school, I did play some sports, but I got fired up by some of the teachers that were interesting people that inspired you. That was, I'd say, the start of an intellectual life. You started seeing well, maybe there's something to this study and thinking about stuff.

MG: When you were in high school, it was the beginning of the Civil Rights Movement. Were you aware of all of that?

PS: Very much so. Those were the days of Father Groppi in Milwaukee, who was a radical priest. [Editor's Note: Father James Edmund Groppi lived from 1930 to 1985. He advocated for civil rights for African Americans in the Milwaukee area. He later left the priesthood, got married, and became a bus driver.] As I mentioned, Milwaukee was geographically very segregated. North of the city was the black neighborhood. Father Groppi was a white priest, not a Jesuit if I recall, but he would stage these marches through some of the white neighborhoods. I'm sure they were Polish white neighborhoods, but it caused tremendous turmoil in the city. He was in the news a lot then, and a lot of, of course, white people didn't like him. Milwaukee is an interesting city, but it still is a segregated city in many respects. Again, geographically, the neighborhoods are kind of well-defined ethnic neighborhoods there.

MG: What do you remember about this time period and the news stories you would hear?

PS: I tended to be on the very liberal side. My father was not, especially because he was working in a plant. I think he was a Republican because he had to be to be in the management position, but the Jesuits have a history of being social activists, a la the current pope. One of the reasons I didn't stay in civil engineering, but went into planning is that I was just uncomfortable with the narrow psychology of being a civil engineer at the time. So, I knew a number of social activists at the time. There was this one cute girl who was with the Catholic Worker Movement, which was a semi-communist group at the time. She always kept me in touch with some of the radicals in the area. So, I was certainly not an establishment person, and that's probably one of the reasons I drifted away from civil engineering. I didn't know much about civil engineering, which I probably would've liked, but my knowledge of the profession was largely from the other students who seemed to want to define a very narrow area where they could be an expert. Again, it was more of the Jesuits who were teachers, who put you in touch with the questioning of society and that kept me, I wouldn't say on the radical edge, but leaning in that direction. So, I think what's funny is my father, I think, was always a Republican politically. My mother, I think, was a Democrat, but as she started listening to too much Rush Limbaugh--and I think this happens when you get older--she switched camps, but there was always a tension. Most of the molds were broken by my older brother, who was clearly a rebel. The interesting thing about my brother is that he had--my older brother was naturally very smart and he never had to compromise for anybody. He would take exams without studying and do very well. He was salutatorian of the high school. He took the law boards [as] a joke and got an 800. He just did a lot of things. Turned out, he went eventually to medical school at Stanford [University], and worked his whole career in the emergency room. He just retired last July, but he was the kind of person--that in applying to medical school could refuse to send in money or anything, application fees, but they still wanted him anyway. When I applied, if my stamp was twelve degrees off-

center, they would question my ability. So, that's a focus in my life, but I'm over that now. [laughter] But my brother is a very interesting person, very smart, very quick, but it was important for me to get distance from him so I could come into my own.

MG: Yes, I was curious about that. You said there were some expectations to follow in his footsteps, but I was wondering what you hoped to do when you graduated high school.

PS: I wanted to do something that--that my brother wasn't the best at. So I liked to play tennis, and he wasn't that good at tennis. He was not good or interested in art, so I became interested in art. I played the saxophone, several saxophones in the band, in high school primarily which now that I think about it, it was a big part of the career because everyone went to their homeroom, except in high school when you were in the band; that was your homeroom, so you went to practice. I got to be the homeroom representative for the student conclave from the band. It was probably laughable at the time, but I got a minor letter in band. It was a nice situation. It gave you a group of people that you identified with. You would play at basketball games and football games. That was like my fraternity in high school was the band experience.

MG: Did you have any certain musical influences?

PS: No, many of the important features in my life have happened by chance. The answer is, my brother was going to play an instrument, my folks rented a saxophone. It turns out that he didn't like it, so I got the handed down saxophone, so that's how I started that. So, there have been instances, and I'll refer to a couple later on, where serendipity played a role.

MG: What year did you graduate high school?

PS: '66.

MG: Were you aware or fearful of the Vietnam War getting ramped up and the draft?

PS: That's another story that you are sparking. When I was in college, and I guess it's junior year. It was the first year that they had the lottery for the Vietnam War draft. I remember it distinctly. I believe my number was 104, which was a fairly low number at the time. I wasn't that independent and mature. I didn't like the war, and a lot of my friends didn't like the war, but I'm not the kind of guy that was going to go to Canada. But I had a friend whose father was a doctor, and I have historically had flat feet. So I went to this doctor. He gave me the name of another doctor to see, and this other doctor happened to be a Selective Service doctor for another draft board. So, he said, "Go to this guy and he will document what you have." Well, I had flat feet. They weren't that bad, but they were on the cusp. He diagnosed my condition, and sent stuff to the Selective Service Board, and also said that they'll probably lose it, so he gave me my own X-rays to walk around with. I was living in Milwaukee at the time in a one-bedroom apartment with two other students, which students tend to do. I got my draft board notice, and what was funny is that the draft exam was probably about six blocks from where I was living, but I had to report to the home office, which was in Waukesha, Wisconsin. So I had to travel ten miles to be greeted by the Salvation Army with coffee and donuts to get on the bus and to go to the Selective Service--what did they call it?--review, whatever. So, I walked in fairly

confidently because I had some documentation, and it was a tough scene because there were young men that were crying. It was a very tough scene. I tried to do well on my test and wasn't faking anything, and I think I got a 98 on my test. It was only because the drawing of the carburetor was a terrible drawing; I think that was the one I got wrong. Anyway, I went through this whole process, and at the end, someone pulled me inside and said, "Well, you shouldn't be here. You should see a separate doctor because of this documentation." I said, "Well, thank you." So, I was pulled into a separate room and the doctor who was looking at the records said, "Well, you're on the line, but because I know this doctor that reviewed you, and I know that he doesn't like people in the service that aren't up to speed, I'm going to give you a 4-F." I didn't realize how close I was to the line there. So again, some serendipity came into play. I had a 4-F and was exempt and was never called for service.

MG: Did you have friends that served?

PS: Relatively few. I have a feeling that my brother's going into medical school may have been influenced by the draft at the time, very much more of a radical person. The odd thing about-- I'm thinking back [about] high school, and I'm cycling back to the religious experience. Two things come to mind. There was one priest that grouped a bunch of us together. He would take us out swimming at night at other schools with pools, and I think that there was a homosexual influence there, that just didn't surface but it made some parents a little nervous at the time. Anyway, four of my friends, after high school, surprising to me, went into the Jesuit priesthood. They're not there today. One is a famous musician, Daniel Schutte, who is a published musician, lives out in San Francisco, no longer a member, but if you perchance pick up a hymnal in a Catholic Church and look under the authors, you'll see his name a lot there. One was my tennis doubles partner. One was a very, very good swimmer. Then the fourth one was just another friend. So it stunned me at the end of high school that here I am going into college and they are disappearing off the face of the earth. Again, true to the times, none of them are in the priesthood today. That was partly the radical reaction.

MG: Can you say why you chose to pursue civil engineering and more about what that is?

PS: Okay. Well, my father is an engineer/scientist, so I'm sure that that is part of it. The engineering school, there are different divisions in engineering. There are electrical engineers. But civil engineering is building things. It's roads, bridges, pump systems, sewage treatment plants. I'm not sure, other than the fact that I had a sense of physical surroundings--I like to make things with my hands. I loved to take apart things as a kid. Every time something broke in the household, I would take it into the basement to take it apart. Whether it was radical with a hammer or taking small screws out, I liked to look what was inside. Now, of course, today there's a generation that has no sense of this because everything's on a computer board and you can't take it apart. But there you had a sense of mechanical features. You could understand things a little bit. My father always had parts around. He had buckets of vacuum tubes. He used to repair his own TVs. As a kid, we would make a radio from a kit. So part of it was that I had a kind of an affinity for physical dimensions and physical relationships that made me interested in it. The one thing that where I started--part of my reaction was some of my friends in college were leaning toward being technocrats. They were defining a very narrow area, and they were also into fixing their cars, and that was just not of interest to me. My career in high school

started shifting when I took a speech class, and again, a serendipitous event--where I can remember, and this for some weird reason sticks out in my mind, that we had to do a sales speech. So a number of the other students spent a lot of time, whatever, thinking of a product and selling it. I, because I didn't like to do a lot of work, just completely invented one. So my technique was I was going to sell my brand of Molotov cocktails to street gangs. I showed up with a bottle with a rag on the top, and I was saying why this was a great kind of thing. It gave me a flavor of the power of humor in a presentation, and I think that that's always been with me. Much of the work that I do today is talking to either planning boards or to groups. While I've learned in my career that you can go too far in humor, but it's always something that's been part of my presentation. So that was the first spark that maybe there's a natural talent there in terms of talking, entertaining, educating. Then when I got into college--many times your career is influenced by individuals. So, I remember the name Alfonse Zaroni, who was big into sewage treatment plants, and for a while I was going to go into that. He was an interesting man. Milwaukee has a treatment plant that's on an island in Lake Michigan. They treat the sewage there, and they sell it as fertilizer which is Milorganite. The reason they can do it [is] because of all the beer industry in Milwaukee, there was a lot of nitrates in the effluent, and so they could sell this. So that kind of interesting stuff. But toward the end--and again, part of it was planning was in the news then. You had Reston, Virginia, which was a new town that was developed at the time. Baltimore Harbor was being developed. So part of it was just seeing this planning stuff that was in the news. I happened to take one planning course in college and I liked it. Again, it melded social concern with some technical influence, and that triggered what was going on. They gave me a little award, probably because I was the only person that took the planning class, so I got the award. That gives you an identity. You started thinking about yourself as a planner, although I knew very little about it. During the summers, I used to work on a survey crew, which was kind of fun. So I saw new subdivisions, got to hack through bushes with a machete. I saw that physical end of planning. but this was something that kind of sparked interest. Again, it was a combination of timing. Social concerns were in the news. Reston, Virginia and new town planning was in the news. So I picked planning knowing very little about it, and it turns out that when I went to Rutgers graduate school, I struggled because Rutgers at the time had a social service bent, and there were many people in the program from political science. There were older people that were already in government agencies. They knew this terminology that I was just rolling my eyes at. They struggled on statistics and quantitative stuff. They excelled on writing papers, which was not my strength. I can say, the good thing about it is that when I left Rutgers after a couple years, at least I could call myself a planner. In some cases, people go to a university to promote the talents they already have. This refocused me. It pushed me a little bit more into the writing, social philosophy kind of thing. It was what the doctor ordered. It worked well that way.

MG: Did you stay involved in activities like band in college?

PS: No. At a certain point, the level of expertise of people that are in things like music--I had very little formal musical training. In grade school, I learned Gregorian chant, which is not as popular today as maybe it should be, but I lost interest in those things. It was fun because it was a social grouping. The funny thing--in high school, I was in a competition with Dan Schutte, this musician and composer, and we had a saxophone duet. I was the first sax and he was the second sax, and at the review they gave me a higher mark than Dan Schutte. They said, "Bad intonation

on the second sax," which is astounding because this is his career. He is a composer. He played saxophone and clarinet at the time. So again, I've been the beneficiary of chance.

MG: How successful were you in selling Molotov cocktails to gang members?

PS: I got a good grade. The goal wasn't to sell Molotov cocktails, it was to get a good grade. Again, what was astounding to me is how it was a win-win. Not only did I get good grade, I had a good time doing it, and it required minimal research because it just all came from your mind. As I look back, it was a nice little marking point.

MG: How were you impacted by the shootings at Kent State and Jackson State during that time? [Editor's Note: On May 14 and 15, 1970, students at Jackson State College protesting against racial harassment were fired upon by state and city police, resulting in two deaths and a dozen injuries.]

PS: It made you very nervous because there were building fire bombings on the Marquette campus. I remember being outside at night watching buildings to make sure something wasn't going to happen to them. It made me disappointed because I thought I was a social liberal person, but I felt uncomfortable with the turmoil that went on. This sparked something else. This was the time of riots in Milwaukee. I guess it was maybe my freshman or sophomore year, I worked as an intern in the Milwaukee County Mental Institution. The reason this sparked in my mind is that at one time I went in to cover my shift, and because of the riots in Milwaukee, they cordoned off the city. So, employees on the next shift could not come to cover me. Anyway, this was a good-guy summer job, where I worked on the third floor, a male ward, and you had very little training. They told you never pick up a patient by yourself. You always have to have someone else with you, but it was a very interesting summer because some of these people were in restraints. Anyway, at the end of the summer, I could tell I got too emotionally involved. In the beginning, I was wondering why the other attendants, both women and men that were there, mostly women, were so matter of fact about this. I found out that if I talked to people, actually, they would communicate with me. If I asked them six times if they need to go to the bathroom, they'll finally say yes, and I'll take the person to the bathroom rather than changing the diaper. I thought, "Why don't we have all these services?" Well, the answer is you can't have one person attending another person full time, especially in a county institution. I remember one morning toward the end of the summer, there were a number of patients in restraints. I remember a group of young nurses were getting the tour through the place. During this breakfast, one guy tore his clothes off as the nurses were coming through. I'd seen this all already. But I could tell at the end of the summer--and they warned you about this--not to get emotionally attached to the patients because you can take sides then with people. Anyway, I'm there covering my shift on the, I guess it was, the third floor. The fourth floor were the people that were not just disturbed, but they were young and strong, so they didn't want me on the top floor. I remember they cordoned off the city because of the riots and they asked me if I could stay overnight because they had closed off the county boundaries. They say, "You have to cover the fourth floor." I'm the only one now overnight on the fourth floor. So I'm walking around, and I don't know many of the patients. I remember at three in the morning, I walk into the men's room, and here is a patient smoking there, and they're not supposed to be smoking. I was smart enough to just ask him once not to smoke, and then I just disappeared, but it was scary because

clearly if something went awry, I was not trained, did not have the backup to cover this. Again, it was a scary time. It was a little bit of Armageddon, a little bit of the end of the world going on. That unsettling time was part of my life, part of my makeup.

MG: How were the conditions at the mental institution?

PS: They're very old buildings, but they were kept clean. It ran fairly well. I'm sure that the medical attention was a bare minimum. There wasn't much training to do. Again, you have to just make up things as you go along. I remember one time there was one patient that astounded me. He would stand all day, and he would have a wadded-up sheet of paper, like eight and a half by eleven, and he would bounce it in his hand all day. Now, if you tried to do this, it takes a lot of skill to do this because it's not an even ball. Anyway, he would have fits periodically. I remember I was back at the end of the ward, and he was clearly in a fit, and he had grabbed another patient. So I grabbed his two hands, but he was so strong I couldn't do anything. I had to basically hold his two hands and walk backwards through the wards to find someone else that would help me with this. It's typical. There's not a lot of personnel, but [in] hindsight it was run fairly well, except these were people that had very few people visiting them. They were wards of the county.

MG: How come that was a job you took?

PS: I think it was part of the do-gooder religious background. I didn't want to be afraid of doing that. I did it because it sounded interesting. Again, it coincided with my social bent.

MG: Getting into city planning in college, what did you picture doing?

PS: Well, you were influenced then by what was in the news, trying to create a whole new city, trying to diagnose problems. Again, Rutgers at the time had very much of a social bent to it. That was something that was just foreign to me. My folks were not active politically. I had very little contact with government, even in graduate school. When I think of the things I was interested in, it was completely unrealistic things. I had a proposal to do--hot at the time mathematical modeling. I was going to do a same theory model to somehow correlate housing density with realtor opinions, and I was going to create this little game that realtors would play to expose their judgements, but it's from Mars. It would never have worked. It's funny that while I was interested in quantitative analysis at the time, I was just a neophyte on the real-world conditions.

MG: Tell me what entering the real world was like. You graduated in 1970?

PS: Yes. Well, I graduated college in 1970, and then went to graduate school for two years.

MG: Right away?

PS: Yes. Graduate school ended in '72.

MG: How did you decide to go to Rutgers?

PS: Because they let me in. I applied to Notre [Dame]. I was somewhat interested in [architecture]. One of my friends, Dan Schutte, his father was a fairly well known architect. I had, again an afterthought, applied to the University of Wisconsin at Madison, which turned out it probably would not have been a good place to go. I applied to Notre Dame and I did not get in. Rather than the Common App with ten schools, I applied to three schools. Two of them let me in, so the choices now are getting narrower, and I picked Marquette. Excuse me, the three schools, that was college. Graduate schools, I only applied to a few. University of North Carolina, I think was one. Maybe it was Madison for graduate school. I don't remember now. But the short answer is Rutgers let me in. I knew very little about the place. In advance, I flew out, and the mass transit was difficult, so I guess I must have flown into Newark. I took a bus into New York City, took a bus out to New Brunswick. I don't think I even found the campus. I stayed with some friends in Montclair, and later on, it turns out that I was the planner for Montclair, but it was just, again, a strange situation.

MG: Did Rutgers appeal to you? I know you attended because you were accepted, but were you excited to go there?

PS: I was a little scared to go there. First of all, finding housing while still in the Midwest is very difficult. So I'm looking at ads, and I called and found a house that was renting their second floor. Again, the first year I was there I didn't have a car, so it was a lot of time on the bus trying to find the campus. It was very difficult and frustrating. Again, in the beginning, you're asked to write these policy papers, and that was the weak part of my education. So I was struggling in the beginning, and that's a pattern. When I started in high school, I struggled in the beginning and ended up doing pretty well at the end. Same thing with graduate school; struggled in the beginning and ended up doing a little better in the end.

MG: Did you live in New Brunswick?

PS: Yes, 8 Seventh Street, which is, if you take Livingston Avenue, just before you hit, I guess that would be North Brunswick, the next town over, there used to be a bar Candidos, or something. Anyway, across the street was a little short street, and I lived halfway up with an interesting family, the Mackaronis family. Eventually we'll talk about Kip's Castle, by the way. He and his brother had a restaurant in downtown New Brunswick called The Townhouse. It was across the street from the train station at the time, all redeveloped area now. He was a natural restaurateur. When the family that owned the house I was staying in invited us downstairs, he would never sit down. He'd be cleaning up before anyone finished. But a wonderful family, Ann Mackaronis worked in a bank. He was the political gadfly. He would show up at all the New Brunswick meetings, criticized everybody, criticized the budget. At one time, he ran for office just to just split the ticket. I always had great conversations with him because he was an interesting man. There were three bedrooms on the second floor that they rented out to students. The other two other guys turned out to be very good friends. One has since passed, but lifelong friends. Every once in a while, I guess greed popped in and the family had a fourth student roomer, and it was always someone from another planet. There was one guy who was a military guy that just blew our minds. It just didn't work. The other guy was into mushrooms and things, and was a roofer, and he fell off the roof one day. So his parents came to pick him up. The

fourth person never worked in this rooming setting. It just was very strange. It was a nice experience because one of the students was in the graduate School of Social Work. His name is Peter Anastas, and we remained friends. Every Christmas he has a party and I go there religiously. The other student was Ed Body who was in the studio art program. I liked to hang around with the artist people at the time. He had a number of friends, and we would go into NYC--at that time Soho was just starting as an artist community. We would hang out there on the weekends. He also was into horses and so other weekends we would go out to White House Station where he would pick up horse riding, and I was a hanger-on. Very nice group of people that we've stayed friends for a long time.

MG: Did you reconnect with any family on the east coast?

PS: No, I was pretty much isolated at the time. Odd that you bring that up. One of my cousins died a month ago, and I went up to Nashua, New Hampshire. I hadn't been there probably in twenty-five years. I saw twenty-five relatives that hadn't seen me in twenty-five years. It wasn't as lively as an Irish funeral, but it was a wonderful time just to reconnect with these people. So, as you get older, there are times when you can reconnect. Then I was just too busy. I did not have a lot of time to connect. Although, when I think of it, it wasn't that far away.

MG: Can you talk about New Brunswick during this time and what there was to do?

PS: This was before a lot of the renovation, and the big deal in town was Johnson & Johnson. The daughter of the Mackaronis' worked for Johnson & Johnson. But it was a tough area at the time. You didn't hang around. Candidos across the street on Livingston Avenue was a go-go bar, but we didn't hang out there. Went in once to see what it was like. Most of our recreation was done outside the city. I had a friend that lived in Jamesburg, kooky kind of guy. We went out there and had fun. We would go into the city. New Brunswick wasn't a city that you connected with then. I had one connection with New Brunswick. Ed Body and I were downtown looking in an antique store window, and this old guy came up to us and asked us if we were interested in antiques because he had them. We struck up a conversation with him. I just somehow connected with him. He became kind of an adopted grandfather. His name was Daniel Antonini, and he was a florist. He was a lumberjack. He lived in the senior citizen housing at the time, which was just a wreck. I went into his apartment, and he had huge collections of Depression Era glassware, but the place was filled with roaches and everything else. It was just a horror to be in, but he was an interesting guy. He used to work for, I think, Squibb at the time, cleaning things. He was a florist who was put out of business by plastic flowers apparently in Italy, but a very elegant man. We used to invite him out to dinner with us. He was just one of the guys. In fact, one time I was living in East Orange, and he appeared out of nowhere. He found where I lived--and travelled by bus to my apartment. A couple times he would invite me on a bus trip up to the Catskills for Easter dinner. He was a very interesting man, who I suspect had a troubled life. I just found out by chance that he died, he was walking somewhere, and I think he had a heart attack. I went to his funeral and called a couple of friends to [come] there, but most of the people at his funeral were people in the senior feeding center or other social organizations rather than relatives. He was a loner guy, but an interesting man, told interesting stories. He was my one urban connection with New Brunswick, just an individual as opposed to a place.

MG: What about the connections you were making in graduate school? Was the adjunct professor you mentioned earlier teaching then?

PS: Yes, my second year--his name was Alvin Gershen. George Sternlieb was an adjunct professor at the time. He was also on the board of Bloomingdale's, and Bloomingdale's was hot at the time. I think there was an Urban Policy Research Center there that he started. Whenever anyone wanted a quote, they called him. It's funny. I would sometimes sit near him in a crowd, and I could tell how smart he was. He was about to speak, he was one of the panelists, and I could see, just on the back of an envelope, he just had four notes, and that was good for twenty minutes. He was a very good speaker. He always had these great quotes. At that time his quote was, "The city is a sandbox; left for the poor to play around in, but not an economically potent entity." A very smart man, interested in the markets. A few professors clicked with me. James Hughes, who I think just retired from being Chairman of the Planning Department at Rutgers, was a connection. There was a professor, Don Krueckeberg, who was the statistics guy that I connected with. Not that I went over their houses or anything, but as you I'm sure know, when people connect with you and encourage you individually, it's a treasure to find that happening. Again, with Alfonse Zaroni, I would've been a sanitary sewage engineer if I followed that track. So, I linked with personalities more than the subjects.

MG: What did you want to do when you graduated?

PS: Well, I wanted to go into planning. One of the teachers was Alvin Gershen, who had New Jersey planning license number one. He setup the program, and as soon as he set it up he became a private consultant. He was not a good teacher, but he had us research housing finance agencies around the state to find out what kind of programs they had. Toward the end of the class I think he may have just mentioned that he was looking to hire. So I applied and got hired. It was unusual. As opposed to today where you're struggling to find something when you get out of school, I had something waiting for me. The downside of that is--when I joined his firm, he had a townhouse in Trenton, almost across the street from the State House. When I got in there I realized how little I knew, because they would tell me to do this land use study, and I didn't understand this land use business. It was just amazing how I could get out of Rutgers and not understand how to take baby steps. Because they had such a social science bent, this was foreign to me. But I worked for that firm for short of a year, and then President Nixon cut off a housing program, which was half the income for the firm. So last hired, first fired, and I was out of my first job right away. It was difficult. I didn't have health insurance. What do you do? It's funny. I still connected with some of the planners at the Gershen Firm. What happened was he had two planners that left--their names were Queel and Lynch--to form another planning firm that did very well. It left a vacancy, and I was there to fill it. It was a struggle for me because I really had no contact with the planning consulting business. It was very difficult. I do have to laugh. Al Gershen would have weekly sessions with the whole firm, which maybe had fifteen people in it, but he was very much of a self-promoter of all the good things he did. During one meeting--and I guess I've always been verbally-oriented and sometimes cross the line--but he was telling what a liberal person is, and he says he likes everybody, "I like Italians and blacks and Polacks." I said, "Oh, you mean people of Polish descent?" Apparently, someone told me afterwards, he took offense that I corrected him in a meeting. I'm not ethnically-oriented at all, but it offended

me that he promoted himself as such a liberal person, but didn't have the sensitivity. Anyway, I was out on my own, and it was a difficult time. I was living outside of Princeton at the time. Again, those days you just looked in the newspaper for [job] ads. I had no connections with anybody, but for some reason--when I was working for Gershen, he was doing the master plan for Deptford Township, which is outside of Camden. I guess it's in Gloucester County. There was a nice lady that was working for the sewage authority, who we joked around with. Anyway, I started travelling down there to see her and her friends. I was at a party, where a guy at the party had just been accepted for a position in Montclair as the assistant planner, and he left after two weeks. He found a different job, but he told me about the job. Montclair was a little desperate, just having lost someone having gone through the review process, and I showed up at the right time and got hired. That's how I landed in Montclair anyway. Do you want to take a break?

MG: Sure.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: Did you move to Montclair for the job?

PS: I was living just outside of Princeton, in Lawrenceville. When I got the job I had to commute for, I think, two weeks. It was a tough commute, even then. You were spending an hour and a half coming to work and an hour and a half leaving. You were exhausted. I looked in the newspaper for a place to live, and an apartment that I saw was in East Orange on Harrison Street near the Brick Church Train Station. I didn't know much about East Orange. It's improved greatly, but it was a wreck in those days. I didn't know the geography of the area. Anyway, Morton Howard owned the building, and apparently he had a lot of real estate, and some people would call him a slum lord. It's funny. When I responded to the ad, I suspected he wanted to take a look at me, whether I'm white, black, or whatever. So when I responded to the ad--I'm trying to think. I must have had a car. Yes, I had a car then. I drove to his building in Newark, and called him from the lobby. So I started talking to him. I said, "I'm interested in the apartment in East Orange." He says, "Well, could you tell me about yourself?" I said, "Well, I am right here in your building." I guess I was playing the race card because I went up, and he met me, and [he said], "You got the place." Well, I had a five-room apartment. It was previously rented by a Seton Hall Professor, who had elegant surroundings. Here I am a single guy. I had a five-room apartment, parquet floors, dumbwaiter. It's on the second floor of the building, and I had three window exposures on three sides, so this was nice. I was across the street from Interstate 280 from the Brick Church Train Station. So when I went into the city I just walked across there. It was a great place. The area was going down at the time. It was hard to find a superintendent that could speak English. There were times where I had to talk to the eight-year-old kid, who would tell the superintendent what was going on. But it was great. I had a good time there. It was nice for entertaining. It was a really good apartment. It was a tough area in that there was a lot of accidents. I got to witness occasionally muggings outside the place. Sunday afternoons I would pretty much go on the roof and watch the building burn across on the other side of South Harrison. There was one funny series of events. There was a couple that lived across the street and I'm guessing it was, I don't know, a married couple. Anyway, I'm sure there was a lot of drinking going on. But at three o'clock in the morning, the wife or the

girlfriend would be out on the balcony screaming at the guy who was down the street, and this would go on for forty-five minutes or an hour. I just remember vividly how the guy just starts walking away. He's had it. He's walking down the street and the girlfriend or wife tries to get the last word. So the guy turns around and walks back up, and it's another twenty minutes of screaming out in the middle of the night. It was the urban environment. I was fairly bold and unaware at the time, because I would go jogging on the streets. There were people that would give you dirty looks. I would occasionally bicycle downtown into Newark, and those were just tough times that you wouldn't want to be caught with a flat tire riding on some of the streets. Part of it is I'm kind of a liberal guy and I should not be afraid of this. Anyway, I was living in East Orange, got the job in Montclair. It was a fun time because my boss then was a guy by the name of Robert Edwards, who was both a landscape architect and a planner. He was an interesting guy because he had planning sense, but was not a strong administrator. So, I got to do things on my own and get in trouble on my own. At those times, Montclair was largely a Republican town, and it was a set administration that got things going. I'm trying to think if we're ready yet--this story is going to come back. One of my roommates in graduate school was Peter Anastas. He lives in Bayonne, still lives in Bayonne, will always live in Bayonne. I went to a party at his house, and I met this girl, Christine Sosnowski, who eventually became my wife. She happened to pass three years ago. I think there was a little bit of a setup, because Peter Anastas and Christine Sosnowski had worked together in the Newark Library, so it was kind of a setup. Anyway, I was interested, and I started dating her. The reason I brought it up was that, again, being a little adventurous, I had built this kite for ice skating, this big kite that had a clear plastic window in it. I was up in New York State, in Harriman State Park, winter time, out on the ice with my ice skates and holding up this [kite]. We first try it on a sled. It works okay, so I get up on my ice skates, and I'm whipping across this lake. I run into small patches of snow. The wind is howling, whips me around. I whip around, but one of my legs doesn't whip around. So, Chris sees me out on the lake and sees that I'm sitting there for an extended period of time, which doesn't look right. I'm, meanwhile, looking at my ice skate and it's turned to the side, and I knew that this was not good. Chris had the sense to pull out a sled when she went out to me, so I could get on the back of the sled. Then halfway in, there's some ice fisherman that saw me, and they helped pull the sled to the side. Just by chance, a state park ranger was in the area. Anyway, I got pulled in to shore. I was, of course, shivering and in shock at the time, but the first test of Chris is--this must have been on a Sunday, so they took me to a hospital in Nyack. The doctor I think had just seen a Clint Eastwood movie. So he basically said, "Hold on to the cart." Chris was out in the hallway, heard someone screaming, and was pretending it wasn't me, but it was me. He set my leg without any anesthetic or anything, which I'm sure was okay at the time. He knew what he was doing, and I'm fairly young. Now everyone wants to be all juiced up when this kind of thing happens. I say that because this event will reappear at Kip's Castle. Anyway, I'm working in Montclair, and it's difficult times in Montclair. The gas crisis went on, so a couple times I'd walk from East Orange to Montclair to get to work because no gas. [Editor's Note: In 1973 and 1974, the nations of OPEC placed an embargo on the United States and other nations due to their assistance to Israel in the Yom Kippur War.] There was racial turmoil in Montclair at the time with the Board of Ed. So it was a turbulent time in Montclair. Montclair is a very cool town. It's got very well-to-do and very poor, kind of a Broadway set, Stephen Colbert lives there. It's a cool town, very interesting. Anyway, I'm working there, and I ran an ad in *The Montclair Times*, saying, "Professional wants to move to Montclair." It didn't say that I worked for the town, but anyway, I get a call from Marianne Purvis--I get a call that

says, "Oh, we have a place. There's a vacancy available at 22 Crestmont Road." Since I had worked for the town I knew of the property. So it was late in the evening, and fortunately I knew how to get there, which was not easy in those days because this is on fourteen acres of land and there's no real sign. There's a little 22 on the stone pillars in the front. I guess it was there at the time. So I drive up, and it's dusk. I knock on the door. The door is open. No one's around. I'm calling in, and it turns out that someone also responded to the ad who was there at the same time, which is a little uncomfortable. The person was older than I was. Anyway, at that time, the property was owned by an investor, and I can't remember his name, but also co-owned by Peter Purvis. There was an insurance company in town, Sanford & Purvis. What had happened was that Peter Purvis and his then wife Gerry Purvis lived on the second floor of the castle. Their son lived on the third floor, Scott. What happened is Peter and Gerry Purvis moved to Essex Fells. Their son, Todd, and his wife moved into the second floor. Scott moved out of the third floor. Where the servant's quarters are, on one side, there was a detective who worked, I think, for the Newark [district attorney's] office. I somehow think the name was Donahue, but I'm not sure. Anyway, I go into this place, and of course, it's very impressive on the inside. I'm calling out, and they finally see me. They give me the short tour of where the five-room apartment is on the third floor, where the dining room is the billiards room, and the bedroom has the dome ceiling, and there are three fireplaces. I'm trying to be reasonably cool, saying this is the third castle I've seen today and I'm a little tired. They said, "Well, we'll get back to you," and I said, "I'm interested." Of course, I didn't sleep. I guess I was there first thing in the morning, saying, "I'll take it," and it turned out to be great. So then I had the pleasure of calling Christine, and saying, "Oh, by the way, I'm just going to be living in a castle." At that time, it was on just short of fifteen acres of land. Very interesting place. So I moved in. I started living there, and it was great, a little bit like camping out. The picture window in the billiard room, the glass had slid down so you had a three-quarters of an inch opening on the top of the glass, but I make do. So I got filler, and I put stuff in there to block it. Heating was very difficult. When the wind was blowing from one direction, you moved to the other side of the building just to get some heat. So it was rugged at the time. One thing that astounded me is it's probably two hundred feet in elevation over the flatlands in Montclair. The elevation difference isn't that big, but there'd be a marked difference in the weather. You would have two inches of snow on the top at Kip's Castle and nothing down below. So I'd be there, ready to go to work, thinking, "Oh, should I show up or not? There's a storm." I go down, and it's like nothing happening. The snow was always cleaner up there than down lower. It was just a very interesting time. The gentleman who was a detective had a mastiff, big dog. The biggest difficulty was when I got up in the morning to go to work, I'd have to get to my car without getting licked by this dog that would ruin my suit at the time. It was very interesting. But it had a lot of mystique to it because a lot of the neighbors, the kids in the area, thought that it was haunted. It was a semi kid hangout. Part of our self-appointed job was to chase these kids away that were always sneaking up there. It turned out to be a great entertainment place. I had a big piece of slate that was a table that I made in the billiard room. That was the dining room. People obviously would love to come to the place. I used to think they came for my cooking, but it wasn't. It was just a wonderful place. We had New Year's Eve parties there, where we would provide most of the fixing, but I would take their money, and we'd buy a dozen lobsters, and cook lobsters, and have lobster dinner. Then I had a lot of old instruments. So, we would all pick up an instrument, and do these little marches, and just fake we knew how to play things. It was just a very magical time as you could imagine.

MG: Was Christine impressed by your living arrangements?

PS: Yes. I'd like to think that I impressed Christine, but the answer was that was part of it. What a wonderful time. You're developing a new relationship, and then you're living in a place that you will never live in again. So what a really magical time it was. Well, the high point of it is that I got married at the castle on June 24, of 1978. Chris, at the time, was the public relations director for Hahne's Department stores. Before that, she had also worked for Bloomingdales for a while. Anyway, she was skilled at decorating things as you can pick up. I am skilled, when I have the time, at repairing things. But Chris was very skilled at decorating. So she staged the whole wedding herself, and it was a wonderful day. It was outside. I joke that we hired union butterflies to fly around. It was a little on the hot side, but it was a wonderful time. She got a band. I took dancing lessons ahead of time, never danced during the wedding, but it was just a magical day, a wonderful day. A number of events--exploring the castle grounds was very interesting. At that time, the carriage house was very much in disrepair. The occupants were largely a raccoon family. It was a mess, but when I went through there, there were files, and apparently, the gardener was the head of the International Dahlia Society. So there were all these files, and I don't know of what period of time, but very interesting stuff. In the back of the carriage house where there's now a parking lot, there was a field of red raspberries. So that was the summertime activity. You'd go over there, scrounge red raspberries. You'd get vanilla ice cream from Gruning's, which was around at the time, and have vanilla ice cream and raspberries. Just magnificent time. Scott Purvis, who moved into New York City--I think he is in the insurance business now, but he was going to be a photographer. He moved into a loft that I think was four stories up. He had a dog, Mr. Jake, half German shepherd, half black lab, wonderful dog. He moved into the city. The dog didn't like the four-story walk-up, didn't like the city. So Scott says, "Would you care for the dog?" First-class dog. This dog was wonderful. First of all, this dog could read an Entenmann's label from a distance. He went with us when we went places. He was not interested in other dogs, just interested in riding. I would be walking with Chris in East Orange, someone would open a car door, [and] he'd go run in someone else's car to sit in the seat. Just a wonderful dog. We would take him out hiking near Delaware Water Gap. He would take off for a half hour chasing some deer. Just a wonderful dog. Whenever we left without him, he would always trash the place. He was very resentful when he wasn't part of the action, but he traveled with us a lot. In the morning, I would open the door and just let him out on the fourteen acres. He would occasionally bring up some pile of trash or someone's mail. He actually travelled with us to our first house when we left there. So Peter Purvis was the contact person who owned the place, but I think there was another investor. The name Bertrand--I don't know first or last name--comes to mind. We got word that the property was going to be sold. I learned afterwards that Peter Purvis was going to sell it to this organization that had the Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh. [Editor's Note: Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh was the leader of the Rajneesh Movement, which was a cult-like group. Bhagwan came to the United States from India and gained a following. After residing in Montclair, the group moved to Antelope, Oregon and are known for committing some criminal acts. Bhagwan was deported in 1985 back to India.]

Purvis had the right of repurchase if it was going to be sold. I'm trying to think of the timing, when the property was subdivided. Let's see. When did the townhouses appear? What I think what happened is--I have to verify the dates, but developer Cali, C-A-L-I, proposed some townhouses, and they were going to subdivide part of the property. The balance of the property--

and I'm not sure what occurred first, but the main house and the main part of the property was sold to the Bhagwan Rajneesh. We got word that we would have to leave and my lease was up, I don't know, at the end of June. Anyway, the Bhagwan was coming out--I thought I looked up the date--June 1, 1981, the Bhagwan was coming out. They were starting to renovate the place, and they were trying to get us out of there as soon as possible.

MG: The Bhagwan?

PS: Yes. Now he wasn't there yet. His followers, all the people in orange, were renovating the place because allegedly he had some health problems, and they were taking out woodwork, putting in a drop ceiling on the second floor. They were really ruining the place to a certain degree. Painted all the woodwork white. It was disgusting what they were doing. Anyway, here we are living on the third floor, and they would bus out groups of people that would stay there for two weeks at a time. The first group came out, and red pajamas all over the place. People working night and day on the place, preparing it. Eventually we got them used to the fact that we were on the third floor, and you just can't walk up here and that kind of thing. Then, after we got them educated, another busload would come out of new people. So, again, we'd have to educate them about our presence. One time we met with their contact person, and they were trying to get us out because the Bhagwan was coming. It was like, "What's behind the orange curtain?" They were saying, "We'll put you in a house in Clifton. We'll give you a new washer and dryer." They were doing everything. Because we had purchased our first house in Maplewood, we just didn't want to move twice. So it was strange living there with them. We could no longer do the clothes down in the basement in the washers, because they were all red and orange from all the stuff. Everything was stained red and orange because that's all they wore.

MG: Can you say a little bit more about this group? Where was he getting followers from?

PS: He was from India. I don't know if you've done any research on him yet.

MG: I did.

PS: Okay.

MG: I was curious how he was generating a following in New Jersey and how he chose this area to set up.

PS: Here's what I know. First of all, it was a weird organization, in that most of the members were older. They were like twenty-five, thirty, thirty-five. Many of them were professional types, accountants and things. I understood that you paid a fee to get in. If you paid a lot of money you would do the accounting, and if you didn't have any money you washed the floor. So there was a kind of pay as you go theory to it. There was some connection with a lot of Germans. Apparently, there was some affinity for Germans. Because we were reading articles about [how] the German press was dying to find out about them, this cult. Every once in a while we would have a Fiat racing through the grounds with probably a photographer in it, trying to find out what's going on. My impression is that you joined this organization because once you

joined and you were a member of it, the philosophy was you can do whatever you want. It was free love until whenever the crabs arrived and other things arrived, but it was an open societal group.

MG: I read it was free love unless you were a homosexual.

PS: I don't know. This is all secondary stuff from reading articles about it, but my brother used to joke, "There's some people that need to be told you can do whatever you want, but they couldn't get to that point on their own." Anyway, it was a free open society at the time, but they were hard workers. They would bus these people in, and they would work for a while. The phrase that always was funny to me was if someone wasn't doing their job, and [Sheela], our contact person would say, "Be aware." [Editor's Note: Ma Anand Sheela was Bhagwan's personal assistant. She graduated from Montclair State University. In 1984, she was convicted for contaminating salad bars in Oregon and served twenty-nine months in prison. Today, she resides in Switzerland.] If you were going to scold someone you would tell them to "Be Aware," that was their phrase. Anyway, there were, I'm sure, some Americans, but there was an odd connection--again, although he was from India, I think there was an odd connection with Europeans. Anyway, we were not going to leave the place ahead of time. We had a house. We had a deposit on a house. We were going to move. I remember the day that the Bhagwan came out from India. Chris and I were in the castle, and we had a guest that was staying with us, too. We were just three inches above the windowsills, just watching what's going on. But he shows up. At this time I think he only had one Rolls Royce, and he eventually had a whole slew of them when he went out to Antelope, Oregon. Are you aware of this?

MG: Yes, but I'd love to get this on the record.

PS: Yes, yes. Anyway, we are there, and he arrives, big ceremony outside. I was below the lintel and putting the camera over my head taking pictures, and they turned out to be terrible because I didn't have the guts to focus to take pictures of this. But it was very interesting. At one time, I think I passed him, the Bhagwan, in the stairway carrying a load of laundry to the basement. We knew we were going to leave in two weeks anyway. Eventually, we left, and they took over the place. Now, I continued to have some connection there because I was working for Montclair, and they were requesting permits and things like this. Let's see. I left Montclair as assistant planner in July of 1978, and worked for another consulting firm, Malcolm Kasler Associates, for two years, and then I got rehired by the township. Montclair changed their form of government, and now they had a planning department and some people who knew me from the old days asked me would I be interested in applying, and I did. I got hired in January of 1981 as the planning director. So I am now dealing with the Bhagwan and the ownership, and it was very interesting. They rented a storefront on Valley Road in Montclair, and had a book and tape cassette storefront for the religion. There was a lot of controversy about them. I was the zoning officer at the time, so I ruled that they weren't illegally occupying the building because it had one kitchen, and they were occupying it as one household, sharing a kitchen. So I couldn't say that it was a hotel or anything else. So they were authorized to go in. They did need permits for something, and at one time I guess they had to bring more electrical power up from the lower part in Montclair. I think they had to do some blasting. Well, of course, people went nuts. They thought they were destroying the world or something. So there was a lot of controversy, but they

pretty much stayed to themselves. One short story is there was a bar in Cedar Grove on Pompton Avenue, and the story was they went down there to, I guess, have a drink or to see the outside world. The owner of the bar saw that this was disturbing the customers obviously, so he told them, "I'm sorry you have to wear shoes when you're in here." So they all went back, got their orange shoes, came back down and reoccupied the place, but it made people very uncomfortable because of the cult aspect of this. The reason they landed in Montclair, I think, is that one of their leaders under the Bhagwan, and it might be [Sheela], I'm not sure. Anyway, she either went to or had knowledge of Montclair State University. Then it was Montclair State College, not a university as it is today. That gave them the geographic knowledge of Montclair. She knew the area because she had either gone to school there or was somehow familiar. That was the trigger, the connection to Montclair. I don't know how they found the real estate, but once the name Montclair popped up, she knew the area. That's allegedly why they picked this property.

MG: And who is she?

PS: She was one of the followers, but if I remember the name correctly, she was my contact person with the organization. She would be the one coming up offering us the Clifton home and the washer, dryer, and whatever else was behind the golden curtain. So she was the one contact person that was in some kind of managerial function. I think, if I recall correctly, that she was the one that voted for Montclair as a location when he first came out of India. Now, there was a lot of controversy at the time because they would show up in Montclair with their orange outfits. No one really understood them. There was a lot of obvious prejudice against this cult at the time. I was even interviewed by the US Immigration Service in my capacity with town of Montclair. They came in to ask me questions about him, because apparently, there was a lot of controversy about his immigration to the United States, and apparently, people were chasing him from India too. One of the reasons he moved here is, I guess, he had problems in India. Anyway, I'm in Montclair, and eventually, they moved to Antelope, Oregon. From reading articles, and you may know all of this stuff, one of the reasons they picked Antelope, Oregon was its low population density, a small town, but apparently, there were liberal voter registration laws. They essentially took over the town. Reading articles, and I can't remember what magazines--whenever his name popped up, I would always want to read what article it was, but two stories come to mind. One is that Antelope, Oregon was giving him a very hard time through the zoning process and things. The planner there was giving him a hard time because they were taking over, and this is when he had the twenty or more Rolls-Royces. One story is that, apparently, there was a contract out on the local planner for him to do in the local planner in a violent or non-violent fashion. The other story that came to mind from an article is that the day before the voting day, apparently, members of the cult sprayed the salad bars in the restaurants in the area so that participants would get sick and not be able to vote on the date of voting. [Editor's Note: In 1984, the Rajneesh, contaminated salad bars with salmonella at restaurants in The Dalles, Oregon in order to prevent people from voting because the Rajneeshee were attempting to gain seats in the Wasco County government. After an investigation and sentencing, the Bhagwan was deported. Ma Anand Sheela was arrested and served twenty-nine months in prison. A third conspirator was found guilty and served prison time as well.] So very strange stuff, and I'm happy to have parted ways early in the Bhagwan's career in the United States. I don't know if he went back to India. I know he eventually died. I think he went back to India, and that was where he passed. So an interesting chapter in my life, my two weeks with the Bhagwan.

MG: How was the movement being funded? How was he able to afford Kip's Castle and all the Rolls-Royces?

PS: I think people paid to enter the organization. They sold miscellaneous books and tapes, but I don't think that was anything. I think it was basically that people paid to join his organization. I don't know if the money came largely from--I'm sure when he came here from India--but my sense is it might have been the entrance fees. Maybe you had to periodically pay to stay part of the organization. I don't know. I don't know anything about the financing.

MG: Montclair seems an unlikely place for a guru to settle.

PS: Well, I think they found a prestigious building, and they didn't care what was around it. It was complicated because the municipal boundary line cuts through the property, so you have two jurisdictions trying to handle this. From a land use point of view, you don't want to get into that nightmare, but I think the answer is, there was a willing seller. They found this cool building that was proportional to how great the Bhagwan was. Again, I think there was a connection because someone knew Montclair State College. That's probably the extent of research they did. Again, they were only here for a short time, and then they went to takeover Antelope, Oregon.

MG: You had talked about their followers being mostly foreign from Germany, but were they recruiting folks from this area? Were you starting to see people you knew join their group?

PS: I don't think they really integrated into society. I think, on the surface, they did. Why would you have a bookstore and sell tapes? Certainly, a lot of the residents of Montclair were worried about their children being scooped up by the cult. Again, they were older people. I don't think there were any teens that I recognized, and I didn't see all that many of them, but I didn't see many teens there. It was people that were--again, they were early middle-age, and they were people that sometimes were in professions, and they needed someone to tell them, "You can do whatever you want," and you pay for that. Cults were the thing of the times, too. There were a number of them around. My younger brother was a follower of the Maharaji, the fourteen-year-old guy that eventually married a stewardess. [Editor's Note: Maharaji, or Prem Rawat, is a public speaker and creator of a meditation practice. He is originally from India but then became a resident of the United States. People believed he was a divine figure and he was very popular in the 1970s.] I recall that he married an airline stewardess. That's when I knew he was not divine. Again, even my own family, my younger brother was a follower of a cult for a period of time. I think there was a lot of fear. In the early days, Montclair had a Republican government, but Montclair was always unique in being biracial and rich and poor all in the same school district, same town. So it was, and continues to be, a very interesting and unusual municipality. Maplewood is a little bit like Montclair, but with the high end and the low end knocked out of it. They both grew up in the same time. These are both railroad towns, which has to do with when they grew up. When the railroads came in, that's when a lot of housing got built, 1910, 1920. Montclair is a little older, and it was a resort town. If you went from Kip's Castle to the south, there's an apartment building now on Crestmont Road, but there was the Montclair Hotel there that was kind of a resort hotel in the early days that eventually disappeared.

MG: What were those two weeks like, where you shared the building with the cult? Were you fearful of the Bhagwan and his followers?

PS: It was the continuing nature of our celebrity existence. Here I am living at the castle. People would ask you questions about the Bhagwan, and you had some firsthand knowledge. Not fearful at all. I think it was the way they treated us. Again, we'd have to reeducate the new busload of workers that came in, but once they learned they were a well-organized cult, in that they didn't bother us--if I recall the correct name, Sheena, she would periodically talk to us. When we were moving out, I had a few friends and a U-Haul rental truck. Well, we couldn't leave fast enough for them, so they got hordes of people come to pick up our stuff, and in four minutes, we were in the truck and out of there. Again, they were respectful of us, so I didn't have any fear. Again, after the fact, I hear this nasty stuff happened in Antelope, Oregon. For most of the time I was there, the Bhagwan had not yet arrived. They had dumpsters out because they were ripping out woodwork. Again, they painted the whole thing white downstairs. They did a lot of things. When they put the drop ceiling, I heard, on the second floor--it had beautiful work in the ceiling--with plaster and wood. They had no sensitivity obviously for that. So again, I think they were grabbing at something. They found this interesting structure overlooking the New York skyline, obviously in a prominent position. This was a place to land. You had to find some place to land outside of India, and this was it.

MG: It must have added to the mystery of the building. Were many more teenagers coming by at night?

PS: Well, when the guru was there, the teenagers were not there, because that was too busy. One story, returning to before the guru time, Chris and I were sleeping with the dog next to the bed in the big domed bedroom--but we hear noises at night, and I get up. Our apartment included the room that's over the portico, which was always the coldest room because it had only one heated wall, so it was always a cold room in the wintertime. Anyway, that was our living room, where we had bookcases and stuff. I hear noise, people talking. I go out, and here are teens sitting in our living room, going through our wedding pictures. Jake the dog does nothing, sleeping by the bed, doesn't care about this. So I confront the teens, and they mumble responses to my questioning, and I call the police. They leave on their own will. So I'm guessing the front door was open, and they just walked in and started exploring. So I call the police, and a policeman comes up. Then Jake the dog goes nuts, barks. I have to hold him back. I was very irritated, and wanted to press charges against these kids. I was talked out of it. It was, "We have them down at the station. We know some of their folks." I think the police were characterizing this as just teens on the loose. So nothing ever happened. Although I was irritated, I thought they ought to be fined or something.

MG: That's very invasive.

PS: Yes, and to have them go through your personal stuff, and you are twenty feet away on the other side of the hallway. It's almost as if someone broke into your car. It's a violation of your personal space. So that was a weird thing that happened. We are better at locking the doors after that.

MG: What was your first introduction to Kip's Castle? Was it when you first got a job in Montclair?

PS: Yes. I knew of the property when I first worked in Montclair because I had gotten a grant to do a land use survey of the entire town. So I drove the entire town, which was a good education for me. So I had some familiarity with the parcel then. But when I got the call looking for an apartment, that was the first time I was on the doorstep going in. Now, one other interesting thing, I think. This recalls the issue of the broken leg. So fortunately, I had the good sense to break just the bones between the joints, and I've never really had much problem with joints--in fact, I forget which leg it was. Anyway, almost a year to the date I had broken my leg sail skating, I drive up the driveway, and I take the groceries out of the car. The driveway then was gravel, and there were ruts in it. It turns out there's ice. Anyway, I have two bags of groceries in my hand. I'm walking toward the castle, I slip and the same leg breaks. So now it's freezing. There's no one around. So I pull myself up the stairs, and fortunately, there's metal grates on the front door. So I can hang on the grates, get the door open and swing in. I don't know if Chris was home at the time. [She] may have been. This was before the wedding because the wedding was put off a little bit because of this second broken leg. I told the tenants on the second floor, "Get my crutches and get my old X-rays." So this time when I rode to the hospital, I knew what was going on. It was not a difficult break again, but this time I pleaded for some anesthetic because I had met a Clint Eastwood like doctor on the first round who didn't use anesthesia. My new cast was fiber glass. It was a different technology. But I would go still to work on my own. I had a backpack with stuff on it. It was my right leg. I had a Volkswagen Dasher. What I would do is I would have to slide in on the passenger side, and the cast was all the way up the leg. So I'd have to slide in the car, and I had a rope attached to the door. So once I was in, I could close the door. I just drove with my left foot. That's [how] I went to work in Montclair. There wasn't an elevator in the old municipal building at the time, so I had to go up the three flights of stairs. I muscled through that. I haven't broken anything since, but that was an exciting time. I knew the routine.

MG: When you first broke your leg, you said it was a first test of Christine. What did you mean by that?

PS: Well, that she was so attentive to me. Again, I'm out in the middle of a lake, on the ice, it's howling wind or semi-howling. I needed some help and she was there. During my recuperation she was housesitting in Millburn at the time, so I stayed in the house at Millburn. She was very attentive to me, which was a nice connection.

MG: A good sign.

PS: Yes, a good sign.

MG: When did you start to learn about the history of Kip's Castle?

PS: Well, partly as I lived in there--have you seen the postcards of Kip's Castle?

MG: I don't think I have.

PS: Let's see here. So this was the magic date, which is cool. Yes. You live in a place that's kind of cool, and at that time, I went to a lot of antique stores, and there were postcards of the castle. Let's see. What's the date on this? 1914 on this one.

MG: Wow.

PS: Excuse me, this is not 1914. What is this? There's no date on this one, but they hand-colored the old postcards at the time. I was always intrigued with these old postcards because Montclair was a historic town. There were a lot of photographs taken of it. It was interesting to see the streets of a hundred years ago, what they looked like.

MG: Why does it say "The Castle" there and not "Kip's Castle?"

PS: Well, I don't know. The answer is I don't know. What's interesting is that this postcard-- 1908 is the date on it. You see the porch is not glassed in there. It was an open porch apparently, and the same with this. My apartment was right below the turret. That's the bedroom that has the dome ceiling in it. Again, five rooms, three fireplaces. My kitchen was the wet bar for the billiards room. Neat place. So living there, you would pick up little pieces of history. Again, when the subdivision came in, someone would provide some kind of background.

MG: Wasn't there a little jail cell on the premise?

PS: No. There's a little chapel when you first go into the right, you know that. But I don't remember any kind of cell area.

MG: Did any Kip descendants get involved again?

PS: Not to my knowledge. I remember the name Munoz from the history of it, but I never contacted nor was contacted by any of the relatives.

MG: My colleague Mohammad interviewed a Stephanie Kip, but I have not been able to read her interview yet. Is there anything we are leaving out, up to this point that you leave Kip's Castle and move to Maplewood?

PS: Not at that point. I subsequently had knowledge of what was going on because I was the planner in Montclair. So once the property was subdivided and the townhouses were built, and then the law firm of Schwartz, Tobia & Stanziale took over. Stanziale, I think, was the son-in-law of Peter Rodino, who was a well-known legislator from New Jersey. Their specialty was, I think, employment relations and environmental law. Before they took over, there was a developer that wanted to build tons of townhouses on the property and use the castle as a community center. It went nowhere politically, never really formally applied. For a long time--I remembered when I was living there, the township of Verona was potentially looking to acquire the place, but I think the money just wasn't there. I remember getting a letter indicating they

might acquire the place and would I waive my relocation benefits. I told them, "No." But they never came up with the money. I think it took a fairly long time because while people in Verona didn't want any change, no one would come up with the money until the county stepped in. I know when the law firm had it, they had social functions there periodically. People could have receptions and things like that. I don't know anything about the ownership or how it changed hands after that part, but the law firm, I think, was somewhat of a politically connected law firm, and that probably might have helped attract the county to acquire the property as county parkland. The building was in bad shape. Again, when I was there--oh, I have another story from when I was there. Snow was deep in the winter time. There was one snow storm, and the heat went off, so I called the owner and I told him that the heat is off. They couldn't get a delivery truck up the driveway because it was too slippery and the snow was so deep. So they finally got a van up with twenty-five gallon cans of fuel oil. So we went in the basement, and what had happened is--and there was just a monster furnace that consumed a lot of fuel oil--anyway, the tank had gone dry and it sucked up all the mud from the bottom of the tank into the works. So this inventive guy from the fuel oil company cut off the lines to the furnace. We setup a trash can, filled the trash can with fuel oil, and he just poked new copper tubes into the trash can to heat the place. We turned it on and it consumed so much fuel you could see the level going down in the trash can. Anyway, my job was to--get up every two hours to run the furnace, and then go to sleep for an hour, and then get up whenever it was to keep the place from freezing. It turns out it was such a bitter cold time that some of the pipes still froze and, a few days later, when a warm spell hit, water started pouring out from the porte cochere where the pipes had burst. It was an interesting adventure to be isolated up there because they couldn't get any trucks up there. Again, I was, to a certain [extent], camping out there. I was young. I didn't care about this stuff. I'm tenant paying a reasonable rent. What am I going to complain about? I live in a castle.

MG: Was Peter Purvis the owner at the time?

PS: He was co-owner at the time. When the Bhagwan sold the property, he had the right of first refusal. So he essentially regained ownership of the property, subdivided for the townhouses that were built on one side, and he's the one I believe who sold the castle to Schwartz, Tobia, & Stanziale.

MG: Do you know the Ingram family, who did maintenance on the property?

PS: No, not at all.

MG: What about John Donnelly, who I thought was a tenant around the same time you were?

PS: He was the one who was the detective in the Newark DA's office. Donnelly, not Donahue. Interesting guy. Again, he had this mastiff, huge dog, that you just had to avoid the tongue. It added to the mystique of the place. When kids were up there, he would let the dog out or the rumors of the dog there. I guess *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, flavors of that. Again, when I was up there, part of the time, kids would come up, either to drink or just to see how close they could come to the castle without being killed.

MG: You started a family eventually.

PS: Yes. Our first house was on Pierson Road in Maplewood. Are you sitting down? Our first interest rate on our mortgage was sixteen and three-quarter percent. That was a disastrous time, and we had some help from my wife's folks to loan us some money. In one sense, while that was outrageous, it held down the price of properties because very few people could stomach that kind of interest rate. So, when the interest rates became reasonable, the property values went up significantly. But it was our first house. My first daughter, Meredith, was born there. Then, quickly the amount of plastic ballooned, and we decided we needed a larger house. We used to go sledding. Well, first of all, the sledding was great at the castle because you could go down the driveway when it was icy and you could almost go all the way to the bottom. It was a cool place to sled, but we used to sled in South Orange on what's called Cameron Field, and we would always pass the house that we're sitting in now at 80 Maplewood Avenue. We saw a "For Sale" sign, so we went in to take a look at it. Although it only has three bedrooms upstairs, the downstairs has a nice layout to it. We talked to the owners at the time and we thought the price is a little high, but we have nothing to lose, so we went sledding. Meredith was with us at the time, and we dropped Meredith off at someone's house and said, "Let's go look at this house." So we walked through this house, but the price seemed a little high for us, and we said, "Thank you but no thanks." Six months later, either the house reappeared on the market or was still on the market, and we approached again, and the price was lower. That's where we made the deal. So my second daughter, Kathryn, was born when we were in this house.

MG: I was curious if you ever brought them by the castle and said, "Your Dad used to live here."

PS: I did that, by chance, with Meredith. I think Meredith may have been there when she was home. We drove by. But one time, I was talking to a developer in Belleville, who had this huge project that turned out to be too big to be approved, but he was a very interesting guy. He came out of Liverpool and made his own in the United States. I was giving him a feel for Essex County. So as I'm driving around, I showed him the place, and we went inside. I persuaded the county staff to let us go upstairs because they generally didn't let the public beyond the first floor. He was a craftsman so he appreciated the woodwork and the leaded glass windows and all that stuff.

MG: Do you want to talk about Kip's Ridge now. I know there was a lot of debate over its development in the town.

PS: Well, yes. I may have some of the facts wrong, but I think Cali was the first developer. There was one initial developer who went near bankrupt. He developed the first stage of the project but it did not go well. Anyway, Montclair, at the time, was very protective of the wooded ridgeline, the first ring of the Watchung Mountains, and periodically controversy would come up. There's a high rise now called the Claridge Towers that's in Verona. Those buildings are above the tree line by several stories. So when that went up there was a big controversy, even though Montclair couldn't control it because it was in the other town. There was controversy about breaking this wooded ridgeline. At one time, the developer of the Claridge Towers wanted to have a helicopter landing pad up there, and the neighbors went crazy. In fact, luckily, one of

the neighbors, and I think on Upper Mountain Avenue, was a helicopter pilot. So he added to the mix by saying, "Well, shouldn't you have an alternate landing site and not just one pad there to land in an emergency," and eventually that proposal disappeared. There were strong policy statements in an early masterplan that I was an author of that talked about preserving the wooded ridge line. The controversy, at the time, with the townhouses, was first, it's denser than single family homes. People were used to these large houses on the ridge line. One of the first developers was playing what I would consider a trick. They were saying that while most of the buildings or all of the buildings would be technically in Verona, they wanted to use the land in Montclair to add to the density in Verona. They wanted to say it was only X units an acre, looking at the whole property, and their argument was, "Oh, we don't need any approvals in Montclair because we're just counting the acreage. We're not going to build anything in Montclair." So it was a little bit of fancy footwork to try and get an edge on the town. Eventually, if I recall, I think all the units are in Verona, but the answer is it involved the clearing of trees. The struggle was that obviously the value of the units go up as you can see the New York City skyline. So there was a great concern about the removal of trees. That was much of the negotiation that went on at the time because they did need some approval in Montclair, as well as in Verona. My recollection is that the units were offered--they're duplexes, two per building--and they have elevators in them. I think that they overpriced the market at the time. I think the first time around the first developers ran into financial trouble, and then someone else stepped in and carried the project forward. Not many people know it's there today. It does look dense when you drive by because while they're just duplex units, there's a lot of square footage in each unit and they are three floors. So they're big units. It's tight; if you've driven in there, the turning movements are a little tight, but I'm sure it's been a successful project, and it's a nice area to live.

MG: When and how did Kip's Castle transition from the law firm to Essex County?

PS: I lost track of it then because I had left the town of Montclair. Let's see. I don't know if I can remember the date. In June of 1990, I was the planning director. I had a battle with the town manager at the time. So I left the employ and became a private consultant and stayed a private consultant since that time. So I lost track of the machinations, other than just reading in the newspaper that Essex County was interested in purchasing it. I know when the county took it over, they had to do a lot of work. When I went to visit a number of years ago, they said they wouldn't let me up on the third floor because of all the leaks and resultant damage. I think the building was suffering. Again, when I lived there, there was no insulation in the building. I had five rooms. One of the rooms we called the Delft Room. It's the room that's furthest on the third floor, furthest to the south, but there was a trap door in the closet, and you could see a sizeable space because the floor below had cathedral ceilings. So you could almost crawl in there. At one time I had some green shoes from Daniel Antonini, the senior citizen, and I hid them in there so that some future contractor would find these green shoes somehow in between the floors of the castle. Once I left Montclair, I pretty much lost track [of Kip's Castle], and all of my knowledge was just from the newspapers.

MG: What has your experience with Kip's Castle meant to you, looking back on your life so far?

PS: Well, it made me think I was someone special. Here, I'm on my own, living in East Orange, working for the town of Montclair, an interesting town. One of my early projects in Montclair was the Church Street Plaza, a walkable area with a lot of restaurants. I don't know if you've ever been there. I was the planner of that with Hal Rabner, a local attorney, and it was a big struggle at the time because of racial turmoil. The sidewalk was extended on the south side of the street, rather than the other, because there are only two owners of properties on the other side. There's the Claridge Theater building and there's a big apartment building. We thought, "Well, it'd be easy just to deal with two owners." But those owners were against it, which was weird. So much of planning is not technical, it's political. So we flipped the extended sidewalk to the other side. It was controversial at the time. Some promoters wanted to close off the entire street, which would've been a disaster in my opinion because you can't have restaurants and parties open all the time, especially in the wintertime. The other thing, some people were concerned about race relations as if the Black Panthers would have a branch office on the street. It was just a time of turmoil. For a host of reasons, we put the plaza on the south side where it is today. The street works partly because there's not a lot of traffic, partly because there's a bend in it, partly because there's great architecture. It's fostered the restaurant trade, and it's really a lovely street today. It got an award from the New Jersey Chapter of the American Planner's Association. Hal Rubner and I were big promoters of this at the time. So that was one high point in my career. The other high point is just lucking into Kip's Castle. I mean, I lived in East Orange on Hanion Street. I'm one of the last people to live in my apartment building that eventually went vacant. Now it's renovated again. After I left, within the next two years, the whole building went vacant. East Orange was on a down spiral, despite the fact that the building was three hundred feet from a train station. Today it's different because of the connection to the trains. But to land at the castle, it was just great. It was great to talk about it. I had great parties. It was just a very special time. To have that early in your life is a nice boost. It's downhill from that point, at least in terms of the luck of the draw, but it makes you feel special.

MG: Can you talk to me about some of the work you have done as an independent consultant?

PS: Okay. Planning in New Jersey is more complicated than in other states, partly because people live closer together and they fight more, partly because the land use controls, zoning and subdivisions are much more legalistic. If you go to hearings in New York State, you might sit around a table and discuss things. In New Jersey, they're like trials. You swear in witnesses and there's this big procedure. I worked for two years with a consulting firm that was in Hackensack. After I left that firm, I rejoined Montclair as their planning director. Where I had a disagreement with the main town manager and left, it was a difficult time. My wife was pregnant with Meredith, our first child; you're paying through the nose for health insurance, the COBRA Program. It was a time of great turmoil. But I had a few private clients that hired me. I'm not an aggressive business person, so the fact that I was kicked out of the nest by the manager, that pushed me out into private consulting, and it turns out it was what the doctor ordered to a large degree. So I'm unusual in that I occasionally do work for municipalities, but because I'm a sole practitioner, I practice as an expert planning witness. My life is preparing for public meetings where I testify before a planning board or board of adjustment or sometimes in court. When a planner is part of an engineering firm, there is an inherent bias. The firm makes money by promoting construction, so they don't want you to oppose anything. But a third of my business is opposing applications. At one time, actually when I was with Kasler Associates I did some work

for the Trump organization because they bought the Alexander's department store chain, and this is on Routes 4 and 17 in Paramus. I also occasionally got hired by municipalities. At one time Parsippany. At one time, Maplewood had me do something small. One time, Nutley. The majority of my work is with developers, but I do a fair amount of opposition work, and some of it is with neighborhood groups, some of it is spurred by competition. In New Jersey, the food store industry is a nasty industry. Food stores will give trouble to other food stores that want to come on the market, and it's just an economic issue. I'm pretty good at testifying. Most of the work I did do is before boards. Occasionally, I'll be in court. One little slice of my business involves the controversy about using eminent domain. In 2007, there was a State Supreme Court case that made it harder to blight properties. Under the [Jim] McGreevey Administration, a Governor of New Jersey, they were promoting redevelopment, almost like there was something wrong with your town if you weren't condemning someone's property and doing a redevelopment plan. There was a lot of abuse of the process. I was involved with some early cases representing property owners fighting the blight. One of my first was as an expert witness in Newark on Mulberry Street. In one of the Brunswicks, they wanted to condemn some guy's bus garage, and it was kind of a joke. It was a political deal to help someone else out. But when the 2007 Gallenthin case [Gallenthin Realty Development, Inc. v. Borough of Paulsboro] came out, the Supreme Court made it harder to declare properties blighted. I was on a roll there. I probably do more of this blight opposition than any other N.J. planner. Usually, you appear at a hearing before the planning board and present alternate evidence that this area isn't blighted. Also, after declaring properties blighted, often towns acquire the property by eminent domain, then you get into the argument about just compensation. How much should you pay the person for acquiring the property? It's an interesting part of the business because it's the only thing I do that's typically a jury trial. So while a property owner can go before the judge, most property owners want to be before a jury, being a little more sympathetic. You can always tell I have a jury trial coming up because I get my haircut and put on a new tie. You have to talk to people on the jury that don't have a special knowledge of the land use lingo and the standards. It's a fun part of the business. It's a little bit nerve-wracking in that these trials always get put off, and sometimes you settle on the doorstep of the court, but it's an interesting mix of technical requirements, your perceived competence before the jury, [and] the machinations of your image. I had one case where the owner of a property was a rough looking guy, but, of course, his sweet wife would always sit up at the table. So sweet Mary was the image of the property owner. Anyway, it's a fun part of the business, and the nice thing is the client sees you do your stuff in front of the public. Much of what I do is sitting, typing away, and the client doesn't see what research I'm doing, but in those kind of public forums they see you perform. So what's neat about my business is I get to meet very interesting people. I get to tour interesting businesses. Although I'm retirement age, I love what I'm doing. It's hard on domestic life because you're out in the evening at public hearings. So when my wife was fed up with the kids during the day, I would get dinner and then I'd leave, as opposed to having the kids handed off to me. So it's tough on the domestic life, but for me it's a rewarding part of the business. I love not working for municipalities because there while someone on the outside would say, "Oh, you wear the black hat. You're always fighting the government." But I think I wear white hats. We're the good guys. But when you really learn what kind of machinations municipalities do to either help their friends or to punish people, I tend to think that my hat turns whiter and whiter as time goes on.

MG: What years were your children born?

PS: My oldest daughter was born in May of 1987. That's Meredith. My youngest daughter, Kathryn, was born in May of 1990.

[TAPE PAUSED]

MG: I am curious about all the pictures and portraits around your house.

PS: They're purchased relatives. I can show you other pictures that are the real ones, but these are portraits of an old family in Montclair. My wife, with a friend, bought the pair. We hold one of them. So none of these are relatives here, but they look cool. I think this is an old Montclair family. The train station that was a supermarket down on lower Bloomfield Avenue was an antique market, and these were in the market. One rumor is that domestics that had been very loyal to a family got some of the estate pieces and then they sold them. They're both in somewhat faraway places. My older daughter, Meredith, is now studying for her doctorate in behavioral ecology at the University of Minnesota, and my younger daughter is out in Seattle. I was out there, and climbed the first third of Mount Rainier to the snowline anyway, but she's working out there part-time; has not found a full-time job. She was initially out there with an internet company that vaporized, and so the word on the street is that she will be reoccupying her bedroom upstairs maybe in November as occasionally happens.

MG: Yes. Are there any memories that stand out from your family life and raising kids? Trips you took, holidays, things like that.

PS: Again, we're far afield from Kip's Castle. My wife was very much more adventurous than I am. I just get involved with work because I like my work and it gives me satisfaction. But my wife was very eager to do some travelling, and we have a special connection to Nantucket Island. Before we were married, we first went out on the Cape, for several years. I have this wonderful foldup kayak that is German made, and it fits in a Volkswagen once you fold it up. Anyway, we would take this on vacations, and we went out to the Cape. Then we had the good fortune of taking a ferry to Nantucket Island for the day. Whether you know this or not, the Gulf Stream sweeps by there, so the water is considerably more tolerable than on the Cape. For twenty years, without break, we spent vacations on Nantucket, and then we went periodically back there. My older daughter, Meredith, worked for two summers for a science organization, the Maria Mitchell Association there, and it just has a very special place. I don't know if you've ever been there, but the beaches are all public as opposed to something like Martha's Vineyard where they're mostly private. We are attuned to the tides. We go to different beaches based on the tides. We take out the kayak and go to some semi-remote places. We used to know people on the island, who lived there part-time, and we get to have a wonderful connection for that. We have done other things together, but as I'm looking through the family pictures, we have a lot of pictures of Nantucket, a very special place.

MG: Is there anything else about Kip's Castle that we forgot to talk about?

PS: One of the events was on Fourth of July. Part of our apartment, although it was accessible to anybody, was the turret. So part of the wonder when guests come there, you would go up to

the turret. On the Fourth of July, you'd see everyone's fireworks around. Not as spectacular as on the ground because you don't have the sound, the explosions, but the owner would periodically come up and other people would come up and share the Fourth of July with us. So that was a nice special time. I remember the building to the north is the Salvatorian Fathers. So there's a monastic group that's in there. It's funny, some of my relatives knew of the Salvatorian Fathers because, apparently, there's a chapel there, and I think it's, oddly enough, a Polish group that's there. I haven't kept track of them, but one time, we were walking Mr. Jake, our dog, and someone was there with a dog, and there was a big dog fight. The answer is, Kip's Castle now is periodically in the news because the county runs it. It was a big part of my life and it periodically resurfaces like right now.

MG: Yes. I do not know if this is the right question to ask, but do you feel it is in good hands now with the county taking care of it?

PS: I don't know. I can tell you, when they first purchased it, it was not cared for. It takes a lot of money to fix that place. First of all, I think you need craftsman to work on the stone. It's not an insulated building. I know that they eventually redid the tile roof, which is, I'm sure, very expensive. One thing about it is the developers that were interested in preserving it were using it as leverage to do other things; to get in apartment buildings, to make their money. It would've been saved, but it would've been hidden. So the good thing about it is that it's in public hands and the public can enjoy it. It's an out of the way place, and I'm not sure it is a prominent part of the Essex County community. When you go to the area, the Essex County Zoo--there's been a lot of investment there in a park by the reservoir there, the lake, and a lot of people use that. I'm sure when people invite guests from around the country, that's one place they would go, to McLoone's restaurant. You see where the county's money went. I'm not sure there's that balance with Kip's Castle. The answer is it's preserved. There are a number of spectacular houses in Montclair. That one happens to be on the ridgeline and is very prominent, but there are a number of other very nice homes. Upper Mountain Avenue, I mean, there are now historic districts along there. Some of the homes have been lost in Montclair. There was the Jansen Noyes house. Noyes was, I think, a financier associated with the Rockefellers, but that house burnt down, and allegedly not necessarily by mistake. So there's been some abuse, but the interesting thing about Montclair is that a lot of large houses have survived nicely. Kip's Castle, because it is largely in Verona, is not accessible directly through Montclair. It's not part of the community in that sense. I think that in the long run it's certainly better for it to be publicly owned. I'm not sure the public knows about the place. I don't think there are picnics on the grounds. I'm having a flashback. When the Bhagwan was there and he had only, I think, two Rolls Royces at the time, there was a huge infestation of the gypsy moths if you remember. Midway through the summer, there almost wasn't a leaf on the oak trees, and during the evening, it almost sounded like rain because of all the droppings from the caterpillars. It was funny because that was the struggle with housing the Rolls Royces on the lawn, plus all the gypsy moth caterpillars leaving evidence of their presence. It was kind of a funny time. I remember how worried it was because all the oak trees were almost bare, but there was a second growth of smaller leaves. It was clearly weakening the trees over time. But I remember the struggle of nature verses the Bhagwan at the time.

MG: How many Rolls Royces did he ultimately have?

PS: It was something like over twenty from the newspaper articles. It sounds like a fetish or something, but again, only from magazine articles out in Antelope, Oregon. But I believe they took over the town.

MG: You had said earlier that this was a time when there were a number of cults springing up. What do you think it was about that time where leaders like Rajneesh--?

PS: The Bhagwan Shree Rajneesh, I think, is the full name.

MG: What do you think it was about this time where people like him could rise up and gain a following?

PS: I don't know. Again, my own family has experience; my younger brother joined a cult, and there was interest in Eastern philosophy and, I think to a certain degree, anti-materialism. It's somewhat of an outgrowth of the 1960 baby boomer types. I never had a leaning myself. My older daughter had a friend and she went to India for a couple weeks. She had a very interesting time there, but during the end of her two week stay, she had had enough because her friend was being courted by someone, and you need the family approval, and a lot of hassles going on, and she had enough. So she stayed in an ashram for three days or something. Her job was cleaning up after the cattle. Anyway, she said it was just a wonderful time to have that contemplative experience. Neither of my kids are super religious, but they're very sensitive in their own ways. My older daughter used to be at Girl Scout camp called Eagle Island up in the Adirondacks. At that time, she said her most religious experience was just being up in the morning alone by the lake, and connecting with nature.

MG: Is there anything else you would like to add to the record? I may do a little more research, listen back to this conversation, and see if there is more follow-up questions.

PS: Yes, that's fine.

MG: Okay. Thank you so much.

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