Historical Collections, Bridgeport Public Library
Oral History Project: "Bridgeport Working: Voices from the 20th Century" John Arcudi (JA) interviewed by Dr. Debbie Elkin (I), December 16, 1997

Transcript

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John Arcudi (JA) interviewed by Dr. Debbie Elkin (I), December 16, 1997

I: Would you mind saying your name for the tape?

JA: John Arcudi.

I: Thank you. Would you mind telling me something about your childhood?

JA: Well, I was born in Westport, Connecticut and educated in the Westport Public Schools. My parents -- we lived above a grocery and meat market that my parents ran. Born May 26, 1921, whatever that means. I graduated from Staples High School in 1938. I went to Yale and graduated Yale, with a major in Economics, in 1942, did a term of law school, went off to war, served in the U.S. Army, eventually became a lieutenant on General Patton's staff in France and Germany, and came back and finished law school, and then started a practice. Well, I taught for a little while at Yale, as an instructor in economics. I came to Bridgeport in 1948, started the practice of law in Bridgeport in 1949. That's my biography.

I: Great. A great outline.

JA: Yes.

I: Could you tell me a little bit more about your parents? I understand they came from Calabria.

JA: My father [Carmelo Arcudi] came from Calabria [Italy] in 1913. My mother [Mary Passafiume] was born in Norwalk. Her father had come from Sicily in 1890. My mother's family went back and forth to Sicily several times, until their father died in Sicily in 1913. Then my grandmother took her family back to Norwalk, and then my father and mother met in Norwalk. They both worked in the rubber factory around World War I. They met and they married in 1919.

I: What was the reason that both your parents came over initially?

JA: Well, my maternal grandfather came over for the usual reasons that most immigrants did -- to better their economic condition. He ran a fruit and vegetable store in the center of Norwalk. He used to -- in those days, ships would come on the Sound from New York. He'd actually get deliveries there now. The center of

Norwalk has been changed since the flood of 1955. But there used to be a dock. He'd also go in by train to New York. To get produce from New York. I guess he went back to Sicily because my grandmother had asthma, and the Sicilian climate was better for her asthma than the New England climate. But then my grandfather died of a stroke and my grandmother decided that she wasn't going to raise a family in Italy, she was going to bring them back to Norwalk. My father -- again, he was born in Calabria in the southernmost province of the continent -- Province of Reggio Calabria. He was born in 1887. He came in 1913, as a -- well, he and his older brother also came at the same time. They ended up -- first my father first came to Bridgeport because there were some people from his same area of Italy in Bridgeport, and then he worked on highway construction gangs around the state, before he settled -- not for very long -- probably the first year or so -- and then he settled in Westport, and was working in Norwalk after that. He actually was drafted in the First World War, but near the end of the war, he got the flu, and he was sent home. I doubt that he was actually in the military for much more than a month at that time. And then he met my mother and got married in 1919 and bought the store and started a family. They had seven children. I was the oldest. The first one they had didn't survive, so I was the oldest of the seven who survived. All of us were born in Westport, except for my brother, who is twenty-one years younger than I, and a former First Selectman of Westport. He just lost an election. He was born in 1942, but my mother was old enough at that point – she was 43, that one obstetrician thought there were these little problems in the birth, so that one was born in Norwalk Hospital, but all six of us were born [at home] in Westport.

I: Where you lived -- were there other Italians in the neighborhood?

JA: Westport had a -- when I grew up, Westport was a town of probably around seven thousand, and there were a couple of thousand Italians in that seven thousand, most of whom lived near the railroad station in the Saugatuck section of Westport. I imagine that the settlement of Italians in that area began -- people coming in,

working on the railroad, for instance, because Saugatuck is where the railroad station in Westport was. It was in Saugatuck, near the Saugatuck River there, down south a couple of miles south of the center of town, which was also on the river, but up, further north. So, yes. There were -- and practically all of the customers were from the Italian group in Saugatuck. There were some of the Italians who had settled in Westport, who lived uptown, but the majority of them lived in Saugatuck.

I: Were many of the people who lived in the neighborhood from where your father came from?

JA: No, no. Most of the Italian settlers in Westport came from an area of Italy that is now a separate province. It is now part of the Abruzzi [Abruzzo] area. But the Campo Basso part of the Abruzzi area, which is toward the center of the peninsula. It's still part of the southern Italian culture, which is a little different from the northern Italian culture. But, yes. Most of them came from Campo Basso -- the ones in Saugatuck -- the Italians in Saugatuck, with interspersing from other areas of Italy in the Neapolitan region. Very few Sicilians, for instance. And really not very many Calabrians, actually. A few, but not very many. That was the composition of the colony then. I suppose it was almost like a rural slum kind of thing because the housing didn't differ much from -- my mother's sister had a family in Bridgeport, whom we would visit almost every Sunday. And the housing in the Town of Westport -- well, we had yards. But it was closer to the housing in those sections of Bridgeport that I saw, rather than the kind of idea that you have of luxurious Westport living, you know? That part of Westport -- Saugatuck, at that time -- was more urban than the northern part of the town. Although in Saugatuck, you still had some large estates, but they weren't where the concentration and population was. For instance, Eno, the great traffic engineer -- he had an estate there, in the Saugatuck section, closer to Norwalk. And several other estates were there -- you know, rather spacious homes. But not what I'm talking about, where actually the blocks -- four or five or six blocks or

so, where it was pretty concentrated -- pretty urban architecture. Not very distinguished.

I: How did your parents end up there?

JA: Well, of course, my father and his brother were living in Westport, and my father worked in Norwalk. He met my mother because she lived in Norwalk and worked in Norwalk. They had the opportunity, and he proposed marriage. He had saved some money. My grandmother, I guess, lent him some -- lent them some -- and they purchased the store. One of the steps up the immigrant ladder, usually. Get a little capital, maybe. One of the things, of course, with the Italian immigration -- most of it came from southern and central Italy, and a large percentage of those immigrants were illiterate. So that if you were literate, you already were -- if you had any kind of leadership ability at all, you became kind of a leader, and my parents -- you know, they wrote letters for all of these people. Which is, of course, helped in the building clientele for the store. But they wrote letters to Italy, for these Italian Americans who were illiterate. This is true, in all of the Italian American communities, regarding the end of the last century, and continuing on to the middle of this century. And we're still in this century -- only two years to go. [laughs]

I: Yes. True. So, what had your father done in Italy? Before, it was your mother's family that was here.

JA: Well, my father had -- his father was a kind of a sheriff. You know, a minor official in his little town. One of the things, for instance, in Italy in those times, was something that persisted -- tenant farming. A lot of people were tenant farmers, and there were fairly elaborate legal structures, where the owner -- usually a nobleman of some kind -- would own the land. He would lease it out on leases to these tenant farmers, and then he would get back half their crops or something similar in nature. And, for instance -- one of the duties he often had was that at the end of the lease term, he'd go to serve papers to these people saying that the landlord had a right to end the lease. He never did. For instance, it

was kind of a minor police or judicial position, at that point. Judicial isn't quite the word. Governmental, anyway. That was my grandfather. Of course, my grandfather could read and write, which already put him among the leadership group of his little village and all his children went to school. They could read and write. I think they had nine children -- my grandfather and grandmother. And my father would -- in that kind of a family, he, himself -- for instance, one of the things that happens in the small villages was that you could buy the tax assessment rights. You did. Therefore, you would be the tax collector, and you would get a certain commission on what you collected and gave. I think my father was in that group, right before leaving. He was twenty-four-years-old when he left Italy, so in maybe as year or two he was in the tax-collecting group. Probably because of my grandfather's influence. He had that type of influence. So, that's what he did. But he determined that he could do better for himself, economically, by coming to the United States.

I: So, growing up -- living above the store -- did you work in the store a lot?

JA: Oh, yes. Well, because we had a large family, you had to -- everybody had to cooperate. I mean, I certainly worked in the store. I was the oldest. I was the first introduced into those skills, and I could slice meat and I could do things and wrap packages, and even deliver nearby, on foot. I never was on a bicycle or anything like that, so that was not very far away. I'd even deliver as a little kid. We'd learn. Plus, not only the store, but also the household tasks. With that many children, my mother -- each of us learned how to wash dishes, how to mop the floor, and whether we were male or female didn't make any difference. And, of course, since the older ones were the male -- myself and my brother were the first two. My mother made sure that we all did that. Everybody in the family had to acquire some of the skills. A few of us, I suppose -- myself, my brother -- the older one -- and probably -- this is rather funny. The fifth child, who was a girl -- the first two were boys, and the third and the fourth were girls -- and the fifth. She and I and my older brother -- we were the ones that I guess acquired most of

the storekeeping skills. Isn't that funny? I never had really analyzed that before. We did those things. Child number, first girl -- number three, and second girl -- number four -- they never really did much work in the store. I don't know how those things happen. They happen, you know? It becomes an enterprise when you have that prolific population trend there.

I: Was that your main occupation, other than school?

JA: Yes. We didn't go -- until I went to college, we didn't have any jobs that made any money. That's where we worked.

I: Right.

JA: That's when the first paying job that I got -- of course, my father was a little bit of a leader – public [unclear] in the small towns in Weston and Fairfield County -- mostly small towns -- were Republican. And despite the New Deal which had come in, the Italian Americans in the larger towns were all swept up by the enthusiasm with the New Deal. There were a lot more Democrats among the Italian Americans in the cities like Norwalk and Bridgeport and Stamford and Danbury. Whereas the smaller towns, the coastal towns -- Darien and Greenwich or Westport -- I suppose the power centers were run by the Republican Party, so they tended to become Republicans, and my father was a Republican. He was something of a leader. He eventually got on the Republican Town Committee. So, to come back to my first paid job -- in my vacations I worked cleaning schools. I got paid. That was my first paying job for me of my life, when I was a freshman year of college -- in the summer. I did it also sophomore year. No, in my sophomore year I worked summers at the beach, I guess. Again, I got money for that. Of course, in college I worked -- when Yale had part of -- in the first year I waited on tables in a restaurant, and I got my meals for that.

I: In Commons?

JA: In Commons -- right. And that's where Ed Logue sent me when I first met Ed Logue. He went the same route. And then I got bursary jobs after that. Well, I was the secretary to the Italian professor after that, for the last three years for my

board and room. I was on scholarship for tuition.

I: I wanted to ask you a little bit more about growing up. Was your family in fraternal organizations or other kinds of organizations?

JA: The organizations -- there was the Italian Republican Club. My father was the President of the Sons of Italy Lodge, which dissolved. They had in the history of the Sons of Italy in Connecticut in the 1920s, they had an insurance fund -- a mortuary fund. The fund became insolvent because of the Depression, and that effected many of the lodges, and my father's lodge dissolved. But that was an important organizational activity for him, because he was the President of the Westport one. And he also, as I say, was in the Republican Club. He didn't originally belong to the St. Anthony Organization, which was rather important. In Westport -- or, in Saugatuck -- because it used to have an annual feast, celebrating St. Anthony at the Saturday closest to June 13th, which was St. Anthony's Day. There were a lot of fireworks and the parade from Saugatuck, for two miles down to the center of town, also to go to church. It was about a mile away -- the Church of the Assumption. But he became part of St. Anthony's later, really. Almost by World War II time. And after World War II, because of the insurance clause and whatnot, with the fireworks landing on cars and --there used to be tens of thousands of people who would congregate there, they stopped it. They stopped the St. Anthony's celebration. But just about at that time -- World War II time -- that he began joining the St. Anthony's celebration. Because the Sons of Italy had dissolved because of the problems with the insolvency and the insurance fund.

I: Was religion important in your family?

JA: Very important to my mother. She taught us all the prayers. She was totally bilingual -- both in English and in Italian. She taught us the prayers in Italian. And we all got first communion and confirmation and so forth. My father originally wasn't -- although his younger brother became a priest, became a Monsignor -- he really, through the Depression, wasn't going to church very much except maybe on the holidays -- on Christmas and Easter. Then he began daily

church going, too -- I mean weekly church going. One of the complications -- I said that we lived like in an urban setting, the urban setting was at least a mile from the church. So that made it -- in those days, certainly in the 1920s, not everybody had a car, by any means. That made it a little distant. You know, the church of their homelands for these Italians was very close by. And similarly, my mother growing up in Norwalk and in the Province of Palermo in Sicily -- church was always close by. But that distance -- that mile -- I've never really analyzed it, but that's my conclusion. It made a big difference in their attachment to the church. Plus the fact, of course, that the Catholic hierarchy -- the Catholic clergy -- were mainly Irish. And in terms of immigrant history, the Irish were an earlier immigrant group, and that always happens that the later immigrant group, who may be economic rivals of the earlier immigrant group -- you know, there's always clashes between the Italians and the Irish. There were. Now, I suppose, that's one of the things that's reflected in the attitude toward the Hispanics or toward the blacks, who come to the northeast in the last seventy years or so. They're like the last group in the labor pool, I suppose.

I: Did the Depression have much of an impact on your family?

JA: Well, we were lucky in terms of food, because of the store. I can remember having to make out the relief vouchers for people who were on relief. They'd buy things at the store, but we had to fill in what they bought. Some of the things that they bought, like olive oil and cheese -- the grating cheese -- they were relatively expensive items, and in the culture, my parents determined early enough that buying a gallon of olive oil would be very good because they could use it with food that was much cheaper, like the pasta and whatnot, but it was expensive. So we learned very early that you shouldn't put olive oil on the chits. [laughs] It would be my job -- as the oldest child -- to be a little inventive about what they bought for the relief check. And certainly not cheese. That kind of cheese compared to the brick of American cheese was very expensive. Well, anyway, that's one of those little tricks. That's part of what was happening in the early

1930s at that point. You know, I was nine years old or ten years old -- about 1934 or 1935 -- before the Depression restrictions started to lessen. The girls usually in the families -- and, of course, there were a lot of them because the birth rate was high -- would work in the Norwalk factories while most of the men -- their parents -- their fathers, that is -- would be working construction jobs. Some of the lucky ones had the same jobs working on the estates around Westport. Again, pretty much maybe not construction, but gardening and that kind of thing. So that construction -- one of the things of the New Deal that was very important were the WPA projects and that kind of thing, which were construction projects. So these people -- without construction jobs -- would be working on the WPA projects. So, certainly, that was very, very important. Very proud people, but all of a sudden, they lost some of their sense of being. Some of them were ashamed that they weren't working. But the work part of it would kind of ease the -- and you didn't -- still the families were large. They may have worked, and they also had relief vouchers, you know? They – what they used to call it – they called it relief. And the change in calling it welfare came much, much later in the history of America. And the relief in terms of the governmental history analysis -- relief was run by the municipalities. I mean, it may have been money that was funneled in from the federal or from the state -- I think federal. I'm not exactly certain of this. It was funneled through municipalities, so that people would have to go to the Town Hall for forms and that kind of thing. And there would be somebody who ran it as part of the municipal government. I remember that. And when I'd be making out these weekly vouchers on what food they bought, that's where they'd go. They'd go to the town.

I: So, when you got to Yale -- I read in your class book that you were in the Political Union, as well as the President of the Italian Society. What was it like for you, being at Yale?

JA: Well, Yale was -- in the 1920s, Yale began a program to broaden its scholar base -- its student base. And as one of the premiere American universities to try to be

representative of the whole American population, a program with scholarships in all of the states, and certainly, the program in Connecticut was especially big. The Connecticut scholarships to Yale were really very, very special. And then they worked out this whole system of jobs so that you could earn your room and board through scholarship. If you were good, you'd get full tuition scholarship, and then you'd work for your room and board. That was the way the system was structured. Not the individual going out and finding work. I mean, Yale did it for you. They had this impression here -- well, this at the same time was happening, as Yale with the Harkness money [American philanthropist, Edward Stephen Harkness, January 22, 1874 – January 29, 1940] which came from the oil millionaires -- the whole system of the colleges and an imitation of a British college system, but not exactly. Residential colleges. But this was reserved for the upper classmen. The theory was that the freshmen would all be living on the old campus, all together as a unit, and they'd all eat together as a unit. And therefore, the necessity of socialization would be as a freshman, as a unit. Then, after that, the last three years you'd be sent to the residential to live in the residential colleges, and each of the residential colleges was a social unit, as well as an educational unit, with library and dining hall. But the bursary students -- bursary jobs were after your first year. Your first year the board and room jobs were waiting on a table or part of it -- washing glasses or washing dishes in the dish washer, on the big machine. I did both waiting and glass [unclear] jobs. That was my job the first year. Anyway, you had what was referred to in those days as the "White Shoe Boys," these people who came from the prep schools. By my time, I would think that -- again, I don't have the exact statistic, but I would be surprised if it were under one-third of the class. High schools -- it was no longer the prep school boys. By now, I would imagine, almost ninety percent would be high school. But then we were in that transition stage, where Yale was making a real effort to be representative of America. Not only from the point of view of democracy, but from the point of view of the longevity of the institution.

After all, you're dealing with intelligence, and you're best served by getting the most intelligent people in the population to come, because that helps the preservation of the university as an institution over the years. I mean, it all worked together. And, obviously, I was in part of that transition stage that was tremendously accelerated by the G.I. Bill in World War II, of course. The G.I. Bill was a fantastic educational revolution for the United States. I'm sure there have been many books -- I don't know whether any books were totally developed or totally addressed that, but certainly many, many, many writers addressed that.

I: Yes.

JA: Historians, sociologists, and so forth. But Yale -- and I guess Harvard, too, and Princeton -- they had already started on this path because even before the Depression -- but the Depression must have been an accelerant, you know? I went there in 1938, so I was the beneficiary of all those movements, you know?

I: So, how did it feel being there? Did it feel --?

JA: Well, at Yale when I went, you had a group of homebodies that didn't live on the campus. They were New Haveners. Even some as far away as Westport. My brother when he came, two years later -- he commuted the first year. And they were a kind of a separate group -- the commuters. They didn't participate in this social world – that took money. [laughs] And I gravitated, since a lot of them -- since New Haven was an Italian city in those days -- I certainly gravitated toward that group, socially, although living on campus, I also had other social contacts. But definitely the commuters were a kind of a -- well, not exactly a subclass, but they weren't -- the aristocracy of the college student world. And I tended to socialize more with the people who weren't the aristocracy, although as I say, I still had privileges. Like, one of the things about the college system then was that you could eat once or twice a week at any of the colleges. You had friends. So I did that fairly regularly. As a matter of fact, I had one particular boy [Shepard Palitz] -- he's now a doctor, out in Bakersfield, California -- he certainly must be retired now. He's seventy-six or seventy-seven. And I used to [unclear] [Shepard

Palitz] for him. A Jewish boy from New York. I think his father was a dentist in New York. And I had other colleges I'd go to. Well, the two boys who came from Westport who came to Yale, whose father was the urologist at Cornell -- the medical school that's associated with Cornell in New York. He was the professor there, an adjunct professor in urology, as well as having a urology practice in New York City and living in Westport. So, those boys were in another college. I'd exchange meals with them. You know, that kind of thing. That kind of thing -- that's what most of the people thought Yale was at that time, and so I certainly socialized there. But maybe I -- well, I was equally comfortable with those contacts. They weren't the big men on campus contacts. Even my socialization with that kind of the -- or with [unclear], since he was at Berkeley. He was from Philadelphia, so I'd socialize with him. But again, we weren't -- the people who had been the waiters in commons because we were on scholarships -- we were a separate part of the Yale society. There's no question of that.

I: Yes.

JA: Plus, that I had the other angle of the affinity with the New Haven group, the commuter group, the commuter group, which was different in law school, after the war. In law school, there weren't that kind of social distinctions. Of course, the war was a great leveler too, I must say. But the fact of the law school and the graduate school -- you know, you were there because presumably, Yale's reputation and Yale's selection process -- even with World War II, was very careful, so that you were dealing with the first probably -- certainly the ninetieth percentile or better -- American intelligence. And intelligence and performance was much more valued than social stationed. I was in law school, where I also was the leader of the liberal organizations of the World War II veterans -- the American Veterans Committee [AVC]. I became President of the Connecticut groups of the American Veterans Committee. They had groups in Hartford and in New Haven. I can't remember whether Bridgeport had a group. I can't remember whether Easton had one or whether New London had one or not. I don't think it

did. But that was in my law school years, and that was both organizational and social. It was different from the college. A totally different social experience. You had much more unified interest in the law school. Not that -- people were not exactly grinds -- only grinds. I mean, people got drunk in personal [unclear]. [laughs] That was part of law school, too. But it was a different social ambiance from what it had been in college. Partly because it was the law school, the graduate school and the emphasis on the intelligence. Plus the war. which again, was the kind of dynamic, that World War II created.

I: Were you with Ed Logue in the Labor Party, as well?

JA: I was in the Labor Party with Ed Logue -- right. The political union -- it was kind of strange. William Eldridge Jackson, whose father was on the Supreme Court at that time -- he was in the Class of 1941. We were in the Class of 1942. He was not in the Labor Party. In the election of 1940, there was a great struggle in the political union, reflecting, of course, where Yale was politically then. Or the Yale Student Body with whether they should support Wilke [Wendell Wilke, 1892-1944, Republican candidate for President, 1940], which I think they did. Kingman Brewster was also in the Class of 1941. He eventually became President of Yale after going to Harvard Law School and teaching law in Harvard. And I think they were -- I forget the name of their party. I think they called it the Liberal Party. Yes, we were the Labor Party. That was the Liberal Party. They had a Conservative Party. I guess in the imitation a little bit of the British Parliament, rather than the American Democrats and Republicans. I remember the 1940 election at Yale. There was a riot. Yale students when Wilke came to town to speak on the green. The town-gown rivalry. Then, of course, the town was all Roosevelt. But the Yale students who probably had more to drink than they should have -- tipping over buses --trolley cars, not buses. That was in 1940, in October of 1940, or so. So that's obviously also a reflection of what happened in the political union. But the Labor Party -- there's no question we were a New Deal. Yes, Ed and I were in the Labor Party together.

I: So, that was different from your father's views.

JA: Not necessarily. My father was a Republican because he was in Westport. But he was an immigrant; he was liberal economically. But as far as Westport was concerned, he was a Republican. Of course, his view of Roosevelt – he mainly didn't like Roosevelt, because Roosevelt made his speech about Italy when Italy entered the war against France -- that says "no good." He was American. On the other hand, he couldn't forget Italy. He was very harsh on Italy. And in the 1920s, the Italian communities -- certainly in the northeast; probably true in California, too, but I didn't know that -- I wasn't there -- they tended to support Mussolini. It only came to the coming of the war -- after that, there was no question of their loyalty. I mean, they had sons in the Army and whatnot. But they tended to support him because of the love for the homeland, and Mussolini was making Italy a power among the nations again, and they tended to support Mussolini. But it was a schizophrenia about it. And, obviously, the schizophrenia was resolved when the war came.

I: So, what did you do in the war?

JA: Well, I was drafted. Oddly enough, a lot of my classmates went in and got commissions. My father said, "Hey look, don't you go running in to get the commission. This is war. You can get killed. Take your time." So I waited until I was drafted, because that time I did a term of law school before I turned twenty-one, in May of 1942. Then I got drafted in November of 1942. I was sent first to Air Force Secretarial School. [laughs] An Air Corps -- it wasn't the Air Force, it was still part of the Army. I ended up being sent first to Miami Beach for Air Corps basic training. The Air Corps commandeered the hotel on the Miami Beach strip. We marched up and down those streets for basic training, and then I was sent to the secretarial school or the clerical school in Los Angeles. I had Thanksgiving in Miami and Christmas in Los Angeles in that year, in 1942. And then in January I [unclear] Army Classification Score, plus my languages, by that time I had Italian and French, so they brought me to intelligence school, near

Washington, on the border, near Maryland and Pennsylvania. Camp Ritchie, so-called, named after, I suppose, one of the Governors. It originally must have been a National Guard camp. And there, they taught German Army history tactics. Well, first we go to interrogation school. That was the first theory -- I was supposed to go back to Italy for the Italian campaigns. I didn't get the 1943 invasion in Sicily. Then I then stayed on in Ritchie, to do the Order of Battle, German Army history, and so forth, and I became an Order of Battle specialist, and then I got assigned to an Order Battle team. I went over and worked at SHAEF [Supreme Headquarters Allied Expeditionary Force] in London, from November of 1943 until March of 1944, when I was sent with a team to General Patton's headquarters, near Manchester. Then I stayed with Patton's Army throughout the rest of the war. Eventually, Patton commissioned me. I came on a team as a Master Sergeant, and I got commissioned by the end of the war as a Second Lieutenant doing intelligence work as a German Army Order of Battle Specialist that this came…

[end of side one, tape one]

JA: When I was with the First Theater Intelligence Service, it became the G2 intelligence section of the SHAEF staff. In November of 1943, it was called the Theater Intelligence Service. The British had to supervise intelligence in a marshian area. The marshian area -- marvelous word -- covered the coast of the continent, from Biarritz in France to Den Helder in Holland, with maybe ten or fifteen miles inland. That was the Theater Intelligence Service reading -- plotting photographic missions and photographing these areas, plus reading French underground intelligence reports on all of these. That was what I did with SHAEF there, until March. In the meantime, learning all about the invasion that was about to come. It was rather scary to have that kind of knowledge. And then I ended up with Patton. And then no longer reading French then. It was just to advise the staff on a German unit that got identified in front of you what they had done before. They had been in Russia, they had been in Libya, and so forth.

Because that was what you – you were supposed to know the German Army.

I: So, what led you to law school?

JA: Well, I think that there my father's influence, undoubtedly. His father's leadership position in the small town -- the quasi-governmental position, so that he always talked. I'm sure that was his secret dream, which he never could do, to become a lawyer. The whole idea got infused in my psyche very early. I never remember wanting to do anything else. **[Tape Off/On] [some conversation has taken place off tape]** Another one of the sociologies of the Yale community.

I: Right.

JA: Well, it's not really a microcosm. Well, a microcosm of America, maybe. It's a pretty large slice of life that you're dealing with -- the congregational school is now accused of harboring mainly homosexuals sometimes by the far right. But most of this is not going to be much good for your labor history project, so far.

I: We have a lot more.

JA: I mean, it's very nice for me, but -- [laughs] Ego-building.

I: This is also a very ethnic history.

JA: Well, it has to be.

I: And it's fascinating. [laughs]

JA: Yes.

I: Well, one thing -- just going back -- I didn't ask you whether your family spoke Italian at home.

JA: Well, as I said, my mother was really bilingual. Totally bilingual.

I: Right.

JA: My father's English was accented. He read "The Progresso." ["Il Progresso," 1880-1988] That was his newspaper. That was the newspaper of the Italian Americans. Certainly in the Northeast. I think it was published in New York. I don't know whether it got up to Boston or not. I'm not sure of that. But it certainly was New Jersey and Connecticut and New York that "The Progresso" was the newspaper. [laughs] So many great stories came in. When I came to

Bridgeport, I began practicing in 1949. I'd hear stories about illiterates among the Italians who would every morning make sure that they carried a copy of "The Progresso" under their arms, so people would think that they were reading. Because that was a kind of a badge of distinction if you could read, obviously. So, my father -- he spoke English. He could understand. But his English was not ever a real fluent instrument. I mean, Italian was the language, and he read a lot of the kind of -- he would read to us as we grew up. One of the favorite books of the southern Italian -- well, maybe northern, too, but I think southern Italian -- was a book based upon the Carolingian Cycle in Europe in the Middle Ages. The Carolingian Cycle and the Arthurian Cycle were dominant in European literature, and the Carolingian cycle was Charlemagne's court. And Roland you know, the nephew, who was the hero of the stories about the Charlemagne court -- that was more the peasant cycle, whereas the Arthurian Cycle was for the upper class, you know? The Knights of the Round Table thing. And probably, also, because it was northern. Whereas the other was concentrated in the south. At any rate, at the beginning of the Nineteenth Century, an Italian writer popularized the Carolingian Cycle with a book he wrote called Li Reali di Francia -- The Nobles of France. [Bartolomeo Gamba, 1766-1841] And this had all the legends about the Charlemagne court, the eventual death of Roland at Roncevaux (Battle of Roncevaux Pass, 778), where he wasn't fighting the Muslims; he was fighting the Basques. But that's history. The story, of course, is that he was a great defender of Christianity. So he read these and he'd read them to us. Or, after having read them, he'd tell them to us. He was a great storyteller in Italian. I was the oldest, so when I went to school, I probably had as many Italian words in my vocabulary as I did English. But as the English vocabulary grew with language, I still spoke Italian. But I didn't really study it formally until probably my last two years of high school, on my own. By then, I'd had Latin, which was a spur to formalizing and learning more Italian. But as my sisters came in, we spoke more and more English in the house. But with my father, I'd be speaking Italian all the time. My

mother -- both cultures, you know? And some of my sisters, although they understand -- they all understand Italian -- well, not my brother who is now -- I'm seventy-six he's fifty-five. He understands Italian, but he has no speaking ability of it at all. He got the furthest away from the fount. Of course, I studied it -- I studied Italian literature in college. I had enough by then. I had mastered enough grammar details and whatnot to go straight into a literature course. I had four years of Italian, and I only had one year of English -- a Shakespeare seminar my first year, and my literature after that was all Italian.

[discussion of ticking noise in background, possibly fan]

I: So, what brought you to Bridgeport?

JA: Well, with my liberal political leanings, and I wanted to -- and of course, the history at Yale with the union at Yale, and the New Deal, and whatnot, I wanted to represent people, and Bridgeport had a courthouse, and the lawyers' trials in the courthouse. I mean, I don't want to go into one of the towns where they were doing real estate law. I wanted to get right into the heart of the life of the community and the life of the law. So, that's why I came to Bridgeport. I didn't go to Westport. Also, I was interested politically. I wasn't going to become a Republican, which would have been almost necessary in Westport, if you wanted to do anything politically or have any influence. So, that's why I came to Bridgeport.

I: What was your practice like?

JA: Well, I suppose I didn't really do everything I could have done with a Yale Law School education because I ended up having a general practice in Bridgeport, developing a specialty in labor law, representing unions, and also in immigration law, representing mainly Italians who had come over here and over-stayed their tourist visas and wanted to stay. Plus, the Haitians, because of the French, and some other nationalities. But I had an immigration law specialty and a labor law specialty, and a general practice. I had interest in a lot of other things, too. I made a good living. I didn't get very rich. But that's basically why I came to

Bridgeport and why I stayed. In those days, Bridgeport was -- you had the defense unions from, originally Chance Vought, Avco Lycoming where Allied Signal is now. Right after -- at the end of World War II, they went to Texas. That's when I guess Avco Lycoming came in and took over that plant. It was empty for a year or two. But they were already -- I say this because there were unions, you know? The most important thing, I guess, was the United Auto Workers at that point in the defense industry. I think it was United Auto Workers at Chance Vought and when Avco Lycoming came in I think that the -- no, it was still United Illuminating.

I: Yes.

JA: Yes. The Pratt & Whitney instead went with the machinists. But here it was the auto workers. And both Chance Vought and Avco Lycoming were the Auto Workers -- right. And the unions of -- one other thing that, of course, labor history -- I'm sure the history of the unions -- you have the whole business that came out of the New Deal years of the 1930s. The Hillmans [Sidney Hillman (March 23, 1887 - July 10, 1946] and the Dubinskys [David Dubinsky, 1892-1982], with their textile unions and their socialist backgrounds, really fighting the Marxists. I mean, the other Communists. In the 1930s, the Mine, Mill, and Smelter workers were dominated by the Communists at the – you know, Matlak (sp?) and Emspak then. They were big unionists. One of the things that one of their big -- I'm sure you've heard this – that was that Emspak [Julius Emspak, Secretary-Treasurer of United Electrical] would never take a salary as a union official greater than the highest wages made by the workers in the industry. Have you heard that before?

I: At UE [United Electrical]?

JA: Yes. That was the United Electrical Workers. They weren't Mine, Mill, and Smelters. They were the United Electrical Workers. I'm sorry. I'm glad you told me that, because I had misspoke for a minute. But they were part of the same -- part of that union movement.

I: Yes.

JA: The reason that I mention Mine, Mill, and Smelters is that Mine, Mill and Smelters had the brass industry.

I: Yes.

JA: And the brass industry was important in Waterbury and in Bridgeport, and in Naugatuck Valley towns. In the history of Connecticut labor and the history of what happened after the 1946 election -- when the Taft forces defeated Democrats and gained control of Congress -- it looked like the Democratic era was going to end -- the ADA was formed [Americans for Democratic Action]. Mrs. Roosevelt and the New Deal -- the ADA had obviously the backing of people like Hillman and Dubinsky, and there was a general -- plus, McCarthy, the crazy Un-American Affairs Activities Committee looming on the horizon. So you had the clash, and then all the liberal organizations. It was a tremendous clash in the American Veterans Committee -- the World War II -- the Veterans Organization -- the same kind of clash that usually New York City based people -- somebody named Potash, who was a lawyer in New York City, who represented the faction of the Communist-leaning political part of the AVC. Or, Gus Tyler of the ILGWU [International Ladies Garment Workers Union] -- he represented the anti-communist left in the AVC, and we had battles in the AVC. He was on the National Planning Committee of the AVC. They called it the National Planning Committee. Now, obviously, without thinking of its origins in Russia -- national planning, you know?

I: Yes.

JA: But it was still controlled by the anti-communist left in the AVC. At any rate, in Connecticut, and I'm sure the big struggle came in the brass industry. And when control was wrested from the Mine, Mill, and Smelters, there was also a struggle at G.E., when control was wrested from the UE into Carey's independent union and the IUE union.

I: The IUE?

JA: The IUE. So that happened. That happened at GE and it happened with John Driscoll [labor leader in the Connecticut state AFL-CIO] leading the forces in the brass industry. I think, partly because what was happening nationally, politically and because of McCarthy and the Un-American Affairs Activity Committee, I think the recognition from the 1946 loss of Congress was that the anti-communist left better present a clean front, not having to defend the communist left. So the ADA was an attempt, obviously, to have a clean liberal organization that wasn't communistic. Similarly, in the Labor Movement, you wanted to have a labor movement that wasn't -- I mean, the fights now seem so silly. But anyway, they were there. In terms of the law at that time, this was happening while I was in law school, rather than after. By the time I got out of law school, the splits had occurred and the cleaning up -- if that's what it was -- the prophylaxis had occurred, but while I was in law school, I think I did a paper in the UE one in Bridgeport, in one of my law classes. But they'd fight about money, which was very important. The treasury. The treasury belonged to the local, and it belonged to the national. You know, there would be various lawsuits over that that became part of the struggle. And most of the losses, I think, were won by the anti-communist secessionists. Not all of them. So, by the time I got out of law school, pretty much the unions of both Kerry's (sp?) union and Driscoll's union -- although Driscoll did form a separate union. Originally, he'd go up with the United Auto Workers. The ship union was one of the things that he was negotiating with, but he didn't end up there. He ended up with UAW.

I: What was the name?

JA: Ship Union. I mean, practically, they'd stop ship building. There was a name for it.

I: Not the Longshoremen?

JA: Not the Longshoremen. No, these were builders.

I: The Marines…-- the Sailors… --The builders. I don't remember.

JA: They're put out of existence because the liberty ship craze and everything else

with the war is what fueled it. But then there was no longer that kind of ship building activity. I forget what the name of it was. But anyway -- I think the name was Green -- the head of that union, that John [Driscoll] attempted to first negotiate with, but they ended up with the band at the UAW. I guess that the brass locals weren't big enough, as were the IUE locals to form a whole new separate union. That happened -- pretty much most of that activity was while I was still in law school or still teaching for that year or so that I taught, after law school.

I: So, you were active in the AVC?

JA: I was active in AVC.

I: In that action?

JA: Oh, yes. Yes. Potash called himself the "independent progressive," and I can remember the caucus -- the famous caucus in which -- and then they called it the I.P., so that Gus Tyler told us all that it's the "I Pee On You" faction. [laughs] They didn't really ever -- they were very pretentious, but they never really gained control of the AVC. Of course, the AVC was founded, really, by a Greenwich Brahmin, -- Charles Bolté, out of Greenwich, who had gone to Dartmouth. He'd lost a leg. I think he may have volunteered first with the British during the war, and then he ended up in the American -- it didn't make much difference. I would think that the AVC would have accepted Americans who were in one of the Allied Forces. I forget. But at any rate, he founded AVC. He wrote this book, <u>The New Veteran</u>, which came out in 1945, I think. Maybe because of the loss of the leg, he no longer was -- you know, he was no longer in the forces of the General Forces he was in, and he had time to write the book. I don't know. And it was a New Deal, supporting -- and part of the theory was that we weren't going to be, after World War II, as the American Legion was after World War I, was very conservative, politically. And that was part of the message of Bolté, in the book, <u>The New Veteran</u>. I don't know if I have a copy of it around anymore. And it got formed. Its first convention, which was in Des Moines. People like Oren Root,

the grandson of Elihu Root, the Secretary of State. And, of course, the Brahmin Law Firm then in New York. Oren Root belonged to it. He was Republican, obviously. And in Des Moines, we picketed some restaurant that wouldn't serve blacks or something, in Des Moines, getting close to the extended Mason-Dixon boundary, I guess. I remember marching with Root in that picket line. [laughs] The next convention was in Milwaukee. I guess I was elected to the National Planning Committee in Milwaukee. But, at any rate, and we had -- for a while, we were an influence. It still exists, but it's really much less of an influence now. It never gained the kind of stature that the American Legion had gained. Oh, we used to pride ourselves on not having drunken conventions in those days. [laughs]

I: There is actually very little written about the AVC, and so I would live to ask you more about that, but I think I should ask you more about some other things. Maybe another time. [laughs]

JA: Yes.

I: I have trouble finding out about the AVC, so I think that the memories of people who were in it are probably the best source. Did you say that the union at Yale was one of the --

JA: The union at Yale -- I'm sure I talked about this. The union at Yale was really part of the John L. Lewis camp he formed after the District 50 of the United Mine Workers be formed, which was his attempt to -- I guess after the AFL-CIO struggle, his attempt to -- well, you probably know better than I. But that was what -- District 50 was a blanket kind of organization. The idea was to get anybody in. The idea of university work was an interesting idea, was an untapped field, obviously, looking for union members, if you go where places where there aren't any, in order to build up. He came in and somebody -- John somebody-or-other -- who was a carpenter, part of District 50, who -- part of the theory was that they started out with the dining room workers. And they actually had a strike. Ed wasn't representing them then, but that's when the law school professors, you know, wouldn't cross the picket line. But that was when we were in college. I

think that was in 1942 -- early in 1942.

I: The end of 1941 -- November of 1941.

JA: Yes, yes.

I: So, it's before Pearl Harbor.

JA: Yes. And that was a strike in order to form that union. And, as usual, those kinds of things --it was met by the intransigence of Annie Bowers(sp?), who was the Chief Dietician of the University dining halls. She was a very arrogant kind of character --obviously not very imaginative with management response to the union. But it got in, and at that point, the National Labor Relations Act [NLRA] -- the National Labor Relations Board [NLRB] -- it was not clear that universities were in interstate commerce. Which, of course, was the legal basis upon which many of the New Deal laws were written in the NLRA. So that it did not -- at the beginning -- have that kind of governmental backing that you would have if you could get to the NLRA for an election, for instance, or the NLRB. What happened is that it came about in the summer of 1942, when I was in law school that one term. She fired Ciliastri(sp?) and Pastore, I think were the two that were fired. That made for a confrontation. We were going to test whether the NLRB had authority, with a compromise, and Fred Rodell suggested that we arbitrate the dispute with a Judge of the Superior Court -- the liberal Judge, Patrick B. O'Sullivan. And he presided at the arbitration proceedings. I represented the -- I was the lawyer -- I was a law student -- I was the lawyer for the union and Wiggin -- Fredrick Wiggin, of Wiggin & Dana, out of New Haven, represented the University. Anyway, I guess that O'Sullivan -- I don't now remember that it was O'Sullivan that made a decision, or whether Yale caved in at some point. I think it must have been a decision. I don't think they caved in --that they should be restored. It never was tested within the National Labor Relations Act purview or not, as a university. That came later. I forget which case decided that.

I: So, this was your first case?

JA: That was my first case -- yes. A lot of marvelous ego building. I think I made a

speech to the assembled union people. I don't know whether it was in Italian or English. I don't remember anymore.

I: So what was it -- was it those and were there other experiences that led you to be pro-labor and interested in representing --?

JA: Well, I had good --

I: Union people.

JA: You can certainly understand this. I think that Saugatuck made me very, very conscious of the fact that I was a minority. And it basically was a Yankee town, although many of the Yankees ran the Republican Party. Although they had already become an artist colony. But they didn't have much interest in the running of the town. I mean, F. Scott Fitzgerald used to summer in Westport, and a lot of other people -- well, somebody like Lillian Wald, but she didn't have any influence on politics in the town, either. But I didn't know about those things, particularly. I knew that I was a minority. And that certainly formed consciousness. I mean, you're always going to be for the underdog, at least if you have any kind of sensitivity at all, when you experience being a minority, you know? So that certainly was an important part of the formation of my political psyche, if you will. Very early in college -- in Westport, there were Republicans because my father was not on the Republican Town Committee, but he had the Italian Republican Club and that was the minorities trying to establish themselves. So, I guess, in high school I probably -- although I knew about Roosevelt -- I was favorable to whatever campaign my father was trying to promote, in terms of trying to get an Italian candidate to one of those positions, or getting them on the police force, or whatever the usual -- but by the time I got to college -- college certainly formed my economic principles and the economic philosophy, as well as political philosophy, which on the background -- on a minority background -- made me a liberal. I don't think there's much question of that. If want to be a liberal in the late 1930s, you want to be a Democrat.

I: College formed it in what way?

JA: Well, I decided to go to law school, which I was going to do, that economics was a good major, although my Italian professor wanted me to get a Ph.D. in Italian Literature, and I toyed a little bit with the idea, but I never really abandoned wanting to be a lawyer. So the economic philosophy -- I was lucky in my elementary economics class, which I didn't take until my sophomore year because in my freshman year I got all my classes -- you know, they pick scholarship students with high predicted averages, and they put them in these small -- I mean, I only had fifteen people in my Shakespeare seminar. Well, of course, the Italian class was small because it was an Italian class, and I had a small physics class, advanced mathematics class. But I took economics in my sophomore year, too. **[Tape Off/On] [conversation has taken place off tape]** Psyche…My first wife -- she was actually a member of the I.P. caucus, but I talked about her. [laughs]

I: [laughs]

JA: My second wife was born in Italy. Her father was a surgeon, and I believe the family left when Mussolini joined Hitler. That was the history of my checkered marital career. Stephen Silverstein is a second marriage [son of second wife from her previous marriage], and he was my step-son. He and Judith Silverstein [step-daughter], who keeps her maiden name. She's a doctor in Northern Connecticut now.

I: So, you were talking about your economics class?

JA: Yes. My economics class Irston R. Barnes taught an elementary economics: Economics 10. The way the numeration was that the Yale graduate course was then -- I don't know whether they were the same, but in most colleges it was a hundred, I think, the first course. And he was a liberal. He was a New Dealer, which was kind of rare. Of course, the Yale Economic Department did not then have the prominence that it does now, with a couple of Nobel Prize winners, and, of course, one of the economists one of the Presidents of the University. Then it was a very poor second to Harvard and to probably even MIT. But Barnes, a younger guy -- he was a liberal. The Yale Economic Department had had

Fairchild, Furnace, and Buck who wrote the text, but they also had -- who was it? Was it Fisher who was the dollar -- talking about in the 1920s, before the Depression. His economic theory was not very valuable, but it was obviously a defense of the conservative establishment. But Barnes was a liberal. I mean, no question about it -- he gave you the opportunity to read the "Times." No, no. I think everybody had to read the "New Republic." And then he'd give quizzes on "New Republic" subjects. That, plus the minority history, certainly helped formulate what was already there, in terms of an economic philosophy. And Barnes was very influential, I must say. We haven't really stopped really to verbalize that until right now, but he was. And reading the "Republic" -- I still get the "Republic," although it's not quite the liberal piece it was then. But in terms of history, it was still pretty liberal when Jack Kennedy was President, and they saw the copy of the "New Republic" on the desk, you know?

I: Yes.

JA: It's now gotten a few writers from the right. But it's still a good paper for intellectuals, anyway. And that kind of really hardened the whole economic leading bit. I remember in my mind, talking about Shep Palitz earlier, but it was coming out of New York. He was liberal. His roommate was from Westport, who actually was in high school a year ahead of me -- John Heller. Heller wasn't great politically, anyway, but he was more conservative establishment-type. He had acculturated in the Westport system. But Palitz was a liberal, and he was one of my closest friends in undergraduate school. And, of course, the Political Union, which I joined in my sophomore year -- that helped. I had a couple of Jewish roommates in Saybrook. I guess part of the reason that they latched on to me was because in getting rooms in the colleges, a few people didn't make it. Then there weren't quite enough -- Silliman hadn't expanded to include more rooms, so that they didn't quite have enough rooms for all the upper classmen. But since I was Dean's List, I had no problem. You get priorities. No, Gus Weiler wasn't Jewish. Gus Weiler's father was. But Weiner was. They joined with me

in freshman year, so they could make sure they could get into college. And also, we had a kind of affinity of interest in--. GusWeiler's father was in New York Symphony -- I forget what he played. Gus Weiler would always tell stories about Toscanini. Ed Weiner's mother, I think, was a school teacher, who was widowed early when she came out of Mount Vernon. They came out of Mount Vernon. And again, in terms of the catholicity of the contacts -- I mean, I had then in the Yale community. But these weren't "White Shoe Boys."

I: Right.

JA: They weren't the Italians, either. But they tended to be people who were more liberal. Gus Weiler was a little bit – I don't know what happened to David. And Herb ends up teaching at the Forestry school. Herb Weiner at Yale.

I: I interviewed him, too.

JA: Oh, did you?

I: Yes.

JA: Well, that's good. I don't really know much about him, apart from the fact that his mother was widowed. I think she had been a school teacher. I didn't really know what his father did when he was alive. His father had some money, though, I think. I'm not sure, but I think so.

I: I don't remember. I'm remembering Mount Vernon, but --

JA: I don't remember. Well, anyway, in terms of the exposure of the parts of the American society, that certainly was one of the things. And it happened very naturally. Both of them were a little crazy. They got involved -- just as a prank -- they got one of the Merriam Webster Dictionaries out of the college library. I don't know what kind of punishment they did for that. [laughs] But my Italian professor told me the meeting -- this is interesting -- about the meeting about how -- at the faculty meeting about the theft of this dictionary. It was announced by Smith, who was a sleazy conservative kind of character, who was the head of the Economics Department, that he was the Master of the College. I don't know whether they call them master's anymore. Do they still call them Master's?

I: Yes.

JA: Well, anyway, he announced at the meeting that "one Jew and one American boy were involved" -- my Italian professor tells me this. "The Italian boy was their roommate -- he wasn't involved." I can remember him telling me this. [laughs] He told me it when he came -- when Liberi(sp?) came to Yale from Wisconsin, Liberi had come to the United States from Sicily when he was a boy, and gone to Columbia Phi Beta Kappa, and then he got recruited in World War I because of the language, so he was kind of a liaison with the Italian forces and the Americans. And he stayed there and got himself a doctorate in Italy, and then he came and taught in Wisconsin, and Wisconsin had Michael Ivanovich Rostovtzeff [Michael Ivanovich Rostovtzeff, 1870-1952], who was one of the greatest historians of ancient Rome, who was teaching in Wisconsin. Yale wanted him. And that's because of Rostovtzeff's influence that he was able to come from Wisconsin to Yale to teach Italian. But when he was interviewed to teach, they wanted to know whether he was Jewish. [laughs] He paraded his Catholic credentials.

I: Right.

JA: But these little - I forget most of these little things. I'm just kind of -- you're giving me an opportunity to look back at the apparent trivia. But anyway, this is all part of where I come from, in terms of formulating economic liberalism. No question. None.

I: Were you involved in any of the other union efforts in New Haven or elsewhere, before you became --?

JA: No.

I: [unclear] Winchester.

JA: No. I didn't do it. Well, let me see. Winchester -- during World War II, that term that I was in law school, I think they had an explosion. I went out with somebody else from law school to look, but no.

I: Okay.

JA: My contacts -- you know, at that time, I went -- at the age of twenty-one, when I graduated from college, I had been to New York City once from Westport. Because I was on the junior high school paper, and the social science teacher, whose name was Gustevia, and she married Serisi(sp?), who I mentioned because I think it's relevant. She brought the staff of the paper down to Columbia for the junior press conference, or something. It was St. Patrick's Day that the conference was on. That was the only time that I had been to New York, living only forty-five miles away. So that in a sense, Yale was --

[end of side two, tape one]

JA: Well that kind of experience -- that wasn't even Westport -- it was Saugatuck. Plus the fact that both my parents were very much interested in education, so we weren't permitted to mix. We had to do homework. And we stayed close to home. We didn't even -- a lot of the boys joined the YMCA, which was two miles away. But we weren't permitted. We had to do homework at home. I mean, that was part of their -- the parental influence -- the need for education, and not to get deviated. So that that circumscribed even more my life before World War II. You'd think anybody telling you now you'd live forty-five miles from New York, and in twenty-one years, you've been there once. And only because the school took you? But it was a different world. Oh, we had a car. My father first, I guess, had a truck. But then he got a car. But he had a car pretty early. But I do remember a horse and wagon very, very young. He had that for delivery. And we were relatively well off, in terms of people around us. But it was still pretty circumscribed. My mother never learned to drive. Well, anyway, where were we in terms of your history? [laughs]

I: You becoming a lawyer. You were setting up your law practice.

JA: Yes, right.

I: What drew you to become the unemployment compensation commissioner?

JA: Well, in terms of practice of law -- and I think this is probably true all over the United States, but it's certainly true in the Northeast and certainly true in

Connecticut. You are inevitably drawn to politics very few -- you know, one or two lawyer practices that were not somehow in politics or at the edge of politics, and so -- also, because of my own economic philosophy, furthering the liberal cause, I was obviously -- have drawn to democratic politics. In the city -- in 1955, Ribicoff was elected for the first time in 1954. One of the things that happened in terms of the labor supported Democratic Party -- Michael Sviridoff, who had been, along with John Driscoll, important in the CIO and in the Labor Movement. The CIO and the AFL had not yet joined, I don't think, in 1955. I forget the date, but it came later, I think.

I: Yes.

JA: Ribicoff [CT Governor Abraham A. Ribicoff, 1910-1998] had promised that the labor support -- that they would have on any labor impact position in the government, they would be consulted. Well, anyway, John and Mike had a lot of influence, and so comes unemployment comp. That's when John thought it would be a good idea for me to be on the Unemployment Comp. Commission, and I became on the Unemployment Comp. Commission. But it was because of their influence. That's how that happened. And the Unemployment Comp. Commission was something that comes, as you know, out of the Social Security law and the title that permitted the States to have unemployment compensation with the federal government paying for administration of it, and the federal government laying down basic standards for the state unemployment. The compensation laws in Connecticut passed -- the unemployment law in Connecticut kind of used the model of their worker's comp. system to create the unemployment compensation appeals administration. The administration itself was the Department of Labor, pretty much following the kind of standards that the States were following all through the nation. But the appeals was a legal issue -- the due process, the person having the right to appeal or denial. And that was what that unemployment job was. It was a quasi-judicial position, part-time. I still did the practice which was an advantage, obviously. Well, the pay wasn't

enough to--. So that was that. And that ended in 1971, after Meskill [CT Governor Thomas J. Meskill, 1928-2007] was elected in 1970, so that was the end of that job. But really part of the political, legal, liberal kind of -- what's the word I want -- out of which that experience came. I think it came out of that. So that because of that -- and when the Democrats came back in, when Grasso [CT Governor Ella T. Grasso, 1919-1981] was elected in 1994 [sic, 1974], and there was a position then opened in worker's comp. It was an easy step to do that. Worker comp. was full-time, and probably the end of the practice, as such. You would go into a position much closer to the judiciary, although I played with the idea of maybe looking for a Superior Court Judgeship if that evolved, but I didn't. I stayed with the comp. and became Chairman of the comp. in 1977. So that's how -- that development really was part of the political picture. The power of labor, basically. I don't know whether you've heard from anybody else about this -- pretty much pact -- that Ribicoff made in 1954, with labor, for its support for the CIO support basically, then.

I: Yes.

JA: And that persisted through pretty much the O'Neill administration [CT Governor William A. O'Neill, 1930-2007]. I don't know whether or not it's now dead or not, but the AFL and CIO joined, so that any labor position in the government -- labor would have been consulted on, that came out of it in 1954. Ribicoff/Sviridoff, I think -- well, I think John was pretty close. I think Sviridoff was even closer to Ribicoff than was John [Driscoll].

I: So, during your time, both in your private practice and as Commissioner in these different positions, were there highlights that you think should be noted, in terms of --?

JA: Well, in terms of practice, probably the leading labor lawyer, I think, in Connecticut was Daniel Baker, who got out of law school. He was New York. His family at one point had one of the borscht circuit hotels -- the smaller ones. Danny went to law school, came out of law school for a little while. He worked in

the State of Washington. I think they set-up some model labor laws early in the 1930s, in the early -- I think -- probably 1933 or 1934. He worked in the State of Washington, whether it was unemployment -- did they already have an unemployment compensation law?

I: I don't know.

JA: I think they may have had an unemployment compensation law early in the State of Washington. You know, that part of the liberal people in the western states, I think. Anyway, Wisconsin had a different –somehow Wisconsin had a different [unclear] of the politics. And then he came back and worked for the National Labor Relations Board as a trial examiner -- Daniel Baker did. He left the National Labor Relations Board around 1947 or 1948 and set-up practice in Connecticut. First in Bridgeport and then in Stamford. I guess he came to Bridgeport for the same reason I did, originally. And there were a couple of people in Hartford -- somebody who just retired -- I forget his name for the moment -- who was a labor lawyer in Hartford. And I came in -- my earliest was really with the garment workers in Bridgeport. One of the things, again, I guess -- probably coming out of the some of the socialist philosophy that the garment workers had a plan where they'd get a lawyer and he'd be the union lawyer, but he could -- members could consult. Consultations would be no cost to the members. You know, this kind of legal insurance way back -- I'm talking about 1950 and 1951. That, I think, was my first union. I don't know exactly how -- whether it was John that suggested it. I don't know, because at that time it was AFL. The IOG chief was AFL. Maybe Joe Rourke, who was AFL -- he had been a State Senator, and he had been an electrical worker and he went for the Seebees during the war, and then he came back and he ran for a Representative when he came back. But he was still in the electrical worker's union, and he became secretary/treasurer of the AFL in the state -- Joe Rourke did. I was friendly with Joe Rourke. As a matter of fact, Norman Zolot, who was a classmate of mine -- before I passed the bar and came on in 1948, he set-up an office with me in

Bridgeport with Joe Rourke for the state AFL. The state AFL headquarters was in Bridgeport then. That may have been my contact with -- well, I started my practice in 1949 -- because Norm stayed with that office in Bridgeport -- Norman Zolot. And Joe -- he was there. Where did I meet John? Did I meet John after the first ADA [Americans for Democratic Action]-- after 1946 – that was maybe where I met John –Driscoll. But I knew both of them, you know? There was no animosity between Joe Rourke and the CIO. I mean, Joe Rourke was very liberal. Maybe the Teamsters weren't quite -- I mean, they were a little bit more aggressive in their attitude of the CIO, but Joe certainly -- no problem between his theory of the AFL and the CIO. Anyway, I'm pretty sure my first union clients were the garment workers, and there was this attempt -- and I used to meet, I don't know -- one evening a week, that any of the members of the garment worker's who wanted to get legal advice, I'd give them legal advice, tell them whether they needed a lawyer or didn't need a lawyer. I don't think I was on retainer with the union, but maybe I was. Maybe I was getting some money. I don't know. For the advice, I meant. If I had any work, I'd -- and then at one point I remember, Dubinsky had a particularly rough struggle with some shops in Meriden -- the center of the state -- Meriden, New Britain area -- during the NRA codes history, one of these people had been on a – been an industry representative on a code formulation, and so had Dubinsky and he clashed. Anyway, you can never unionize that factory. He had a big campaign. He was going to unionize this factory -- or several factories there. There were a lot of Italian workers, so Tyler recruited me to write things in Italian and whatnot there. It was hardly legal, but it was a lot of fun. And Dubinsky, at that point, had begun to train people in a kind of a labor college, and then I remember there was a kid out of Princeton who was one of the organizers who had gone through this training. He was a real Brahmin, and one of the miscreants, if you will [laughs] --the factory owners. Where the hell were we? Wallingford. This campaign that Dubinsky -- he wasn't particularly interested in getting one guy, and I think one guy -- well, there are

quite a few factories out there. But anyway, I remember the Princeton guy yelling all kinds of invective -- as the owner's car coming into the picket line -- I mean, coming in across the picket line to go in -- rather -- real scurrilous language from a Princeton guy. [laughs] Anyway, so I represented that local because a lot of people were arrested on the picket line. Particularly I thought it might be worthwhile to save the organizer. I mean, I didn't want to give the organizer a criminal record, so I had about twelve people -- and then the usual bit that you did in the all-American courts. Plea bargaining. You've got to have 'guilty' here because they actually struck somebody, you know? But anyway, I didn't want the Princeton organizer to get a criminal record. I remember that. I was representing the garment workers in the Wallingford strike, and in those days, they had the town courts -- the court system was not so organized as it is now. Everything is Superior Court. They used to have town courts, and they used to have grand jury courts, in the real small towns. I'd go up there in the evening, and he'd run court in the evening -- the prosecutor, and the Judge is a part-time political position -- to accomplish the defense of these poor workers. [laughs] But I represented the garment workers. And then from there, I remember getting some work with grievances and the Bridgeport Brass local here. Then, although I did not have the work of the international UAW, but Baker would bring me in if he needed another lawyer on UAW cases because Baker did have -- because his NLRB background. He represented quite a lot of the international, along with Dimon(sp?), who came later. Dimon came out of the –he had done the Law Journal at Columbia Law School, and he joined with Baker. Baker, by then, had moved to Stamford. I also represented -- in the District 50 kind of situation -- they organized rubber workers in Bridgeport. This was in the 1940s. And there was a strike that occurred at the -- I forget the name. I see the name on the gravestone when I pass the cemetery in the morning. It's a nice park. H.L. Canfield Rubber Company. It was near the river -- the factory. There was a strike, and there was an injunction and the injunction got dissolved. The injunction was granted in the first place by the

Republican-appointee Superior Court dissolved by a Democratic appointee in Superior Court. And then Dan Brennan, whose father had come out of Pennsylvania -- he was representing the union. I'm just coming out of law school. He represented the union in that strike. The reason he represented a union, his father represented a union. His father had died. But his father had mine worker contacts even though his father was a Republican here, in Connecticut. District 50 had organized Canfield Rubber. Brennan's partner was Daly, a Yale Law School grad, but older than I. They had the theory that they were going to sue Canfield, because Canfield -- whenever you get an injunction in the practice, you have to give a bond to cover the costs and to guarantee that you will do things that the Judge says you have to do. Anyway, the theory that Daly developed is that you sue on the bond for the damages to the people because the damages from the injunction were that they had lost wages, they had done this, they had done that. So they developed this great theory -- very interesting legal theory -- that you have a property right to a job, and the injunction infringes upon that property, right? It was very advanced. I don't think the law has come quite that far, although in some ways it has approached that fifty years later. So they needed researchers, and I was just out of law school. That was really my first labor case, really. I mean, I wasn't the lawyer, though. I was one of the lawyers. Eventually, they settled that many, many -- maybe five years later. But that was great for teaching all of the various motions and whatnot in that case. And they did pay something. **[Tape Off/On]** Yes, so that the Canfield case was really my first. And that introduced me to District 50, generally. I mean, a re-introduction. I had had that introduction at Yale, but they were different people. They weren't the same people who had been at Yale. But it also introduced me to the legal staff of District 50, which was [laughs] – Yelverton Cowherd was the attorney for District 50. He also came out of the minefields ambiance, and his assistant was -- or maybe Cowherd was for the mine workers, and Alfred Chehurn(sp?) was the lawyer for District 50, nationwide. District 50 had also organized utility workers.

Gas and water company workers in Bridgeport and New Haven, and they had some strikes. I think that one of the strikes Brennan represented District 50, with the Bridgeport local. Then I got a New Haven case -- I think it was a grievance case -- out of the New Haven local, with the New Haven gas company. And then I became the District 50 -- I don't know how the transition, but I guess Chehurn liked me or whatever. And I became the District 50 lawyer and I represented them in the couple of strikes here in Bridgeport -- the gas company workers again. The New Haven Water Company workers -- was that the first one over there? I had the garment workers, and I had the brass [Bridgeport Brass] grievances. At that point, the brass workers were -- the head of the union was a Republican, but it was in Driscoll's union, I'm pretty sure. Then I got a case in the 1960s with the District 50. They sort of faded out of the picture. But they were municipal workers in Norwich, also they represented the Dow Chemical Company, which is at Allan Point. I think it was in Ledyard. Anyway, it was in Eastern Connecticut. And some flaming Irishman, Michael McDermott, he was a firebrand. He had been a carpenter in District 50. And we had a couple strikes there, where I represented them. And out of that came one -- McDermott called somebody a union buster, and he sued him for libel. I just think he'd wear the badge with grace. I mean, a member of management. He sued him for libel. And he sued the Norwich paper and the New London paper who printed the story. So, I was involved in a lawsuit defending McDermott and District 50. Anyway, this proved to be very profitable, but it just dragged out for three or four years, and it wound up with nothing. But again, the question of what was libelous, and the question of the "New York Times" versus Sullivan, I think, by that time had come down. So you had big questions now. Yale Law School and Big Law became in the picture from this small one. All right -- that one I remember. District 50 out there. Some of the other union cases. In the strikes -- in Bridgeport -- one of them involved putting sand in the gas main. That wasn't very nice. Another one -- the Bridgeport leader was somebody who was a Croatian. They organized a crew to

go to Milford, to one of the foreman's houses and throw balloons filled with paint -- filled with paint -- against the house. They bombed it with paint. [laughs] Somehow or another, the man had his car ready and he began to follow them, and he thought he identified the people they were, so they were being charged with breach of peace or trespass or some kind of minor criminal activity, and I was defending them. That proved to be a long case. And the union was spending money. I mean, I had maps made of the whole route and whatnot. I had a ball with that one there, in Milford. By then it was no longer a town court. It was called a circuit court, and was later amalgamated in the Superior Court. But then, in terms of Connecticut legal history, it was a misdemeanor proceeding in one of the first, involving a strike in the new circuit court. Eventually, a couple people got convicted. I think they had six. They picked their own guys [laughs], but of course, nobody could tell, "You picked the wrong guys." [laughs] There was a jury, and there were a couple who had filmed the bombs. They picked the people who were convicted and had not thrown the bombs. They happened to be in the car. [laughs] But, of course, I wasn't about to tell them. [laughs] Anyway, that was a case. In those days, for the most part, you would be having cases that didn't really involve the great principles of law. There would be like this minor thing, like the one in Wallingford -- this one with District 50. Because of the picket line activity, you'd be defending a criminal case, you know?

I: Yes.

JA: In Eastern Connecticut, the amalgamated was in Eastern Connecticut, and I don't know whether I actually represented anybody, although I may have gotten peripherally involved with some of those -- all that other history is now dead. The ILG was not in Eastern Connecticut. The ILG was pretty much the coastline and maybe up in Hartford and New Britain -- not the Connecticut Valley so much -- yes, the Connecticut Valley. But they didn't go east of the river. Amalgamated was, for the most part, concentrated east of the river, in those small towns. French Canadian, Italian women works, east of the river. But I don't think I represented -

- I'm trying to think, but I just can't remember. But I think I represented Amalgamated. I can't place any. I represented the Greenwich Local Laborer's Union. Greenwich Local Laborer's Union was fighting Coia. There had developed in the Laborer's international -- at least for New England -- this concept of the heavy and highway construction, and it wasn't only for New England -- it also involved New York -- of the heavy and highway construction. One of the purposes, apart from the fact was too rational to separate heavy and highway from other construction, as a special unit of the industry. But it also provided a vehicle for Coia out of Providence, Rhode Island, to carve themselves out an empire.

I: Oh.

JA: His son is now President of the union. His son is a lawyer in Providence, and he's now President of the union. His son is, as a matter of fact, being investigated now.

I: Oh.

JA: Coia itself was for corruption charges or whatever. I don't know what it was. But at any rate, the Greenwich local is on the border between New York and Connecticut. New York prices were better than Connecticut prices. Part of the strategy of highway and construction was to have uniformed rates throughout Connecticut. Greenwich didn't like that. So, Greenwich would be fighting "heavy and highway," and I got involved representing them in various intra-union disputes, and they didn't particularly like Coia, who, I think, was also the National Treasurer, besides being a power here in New England. And that dragged out. I mean, I managed to keep part of their independence, and they'd be appealing to the national convention in the usual procedures. I didn't ever get to the national convention, but I'd be formulating strategy with them. That was kind of interesting. I didn't know at the time what was going to happen later, that the Taft-Hartley mechanism that Coia himself got targeted. But again, in terms of labor history, in terms of the power of the Laborer's International, although I

never represented the Laborer's International here in Bridgeport. I did represent that at the Greenwich local. And I represented Hudson Wire. The law case was in Torrington, but they were in Winsted. Was it after the flood? The flood was in 1955. This must have been in the early 1960s. I may be confusing two cases. The Hudson Wire case was an arbitration case, and I won that in Connecticut Superior Court. It was an arbitration. I was confusing it with a Torrington case, where UAW local in Torrington was out on a strike. And that's when high-powered law came in. I used the legislation that had passed because of the Civil Rights struggle, moving state actions into federal courts. There was a picket line, and the company sought an injunction in Torrington, and I defended the enemy. And after the second day of the trial in the injunction, I pulled that Civil Rights statute to get the case transferred to federal court, stopping their tact. It didn't prove successful, but it took two weeks before it came back. By that time, the theory was that they would make a settlement strike.

I: Oh.

JA: That was one of those plants in Torrington. That was memorable. I'll never forget one of the examples that the company was trying to show about the picketers -- unruly behavior. As one of the strike breakers were crossing the picket line, one of the women pickets yelled at her, 'I've picked better scabs than you off my asshole." [laughs]

I: [laughs]

JA: I can't remember anything else about the strike, but I can remember that. [laughs]

I: [laughs]

JA: That was a breach of the peace, according to the company that made it an injunction to stop. And then there were a couple of cases, not very successful, where Timex -- the watch manufacturers in the Waterbury area -- I think they were also UAW -- but the movement toward the south, moving workers out of Connecticut, and attempting with the contract, the pension funds and whatnot, attempting to stop it because the contract provided that the product was in

negotiation. And then they hadn't negotiated for the union. Those suits did not turn out to be successful. They couldn't stop the movement, and I think one of the things, also, in those things -- use the idea of the seniority status, that you couldn't destroy the seniority status of these people because the contract guaranteed it by moving that part of the plant out. Try to use that legal -- it didn't work. But those were the attempts made to arrest the migration of the jobs. One of the things I became increasingly aware of by the 1960s was as the older workers retired, the unions -- especially the ones that had been the CIO ones -- in their concepts of democracy, insisted that the older workers remain members of the local, which meant that they could vote. And sometimes when they were voting, they weren't really voting the interests of the working members. They were voting their interests. But, of course, the union also had become a social movement -- not just an economic instrument -- so the UAW, which had those provisions, would -- well, the UAW would have senior centers -- that kind of thing -- for locals, and then as they lost the jobs, they'd consolidate locals. That involved -- sometimes if there was money. If the local had money or the international's money -- they would need some kind of legal maneuvering in those cases. The same kind of thing that had happened when the anticommunist left ousted the U.E. and had ousted the National Mine, Mill, and Smelter. The same kind of "Will the local have the money or will the international have the money?"

I: [laughs]

JA: And that created legal processes.

I: Were you involved with those? That was very early on. Were you involved in any -- I mean in your legal career?

JA: I wasn't involved in the ouster of the communists -- no. I was in law school.

I: 1949.

JA: Or even earlier. The IUE one in Bridgeport was, I think, 1946 or 1947. Santoianni -- he went with Kerry, with IUE. That was General Electric, right?

I: Yes.

JA: One of the people in the communists left was Josephine ---

I: …Willard?

JA: …Willard. Sinesa was her maiden name. Willard. Yes. I remember she had a following in the union -- a couple of black women I remember, in the union. At any rate, one of my minor coups is that when the House Un- American Activities Committee came to hold hearings in Bridgeport. They wanted to investigate the GE union. This was history, now, because the IUE had already taken over. Anyway, Josephine came to talk to me -- one woman, who was one of her people in the union before the IUE had taken over. They didn't want to have all the repercussions of the House Un-American Activities questioning her, so I figured out the woman had had some uterine problems, and I got her admitted to the hospital for that day. [laughs] **[Tape Off/On] [referring to phone call - Would you believe credit cards?]**

JA: What's you do your thesis on?

I: On the limits of acceptable political dissent at Yale from the 1920's to the 1950's.

JA: Oh, you told me that -- I'm sorry.

I: That's okay.

JA: I was looking at students and blue collar workers and professors.

I: Yes, the law school, I guess, occupied a special niche there.

JA: Yes. [laughs] Actually, a book had been already written about the law school. [laughs]

I: Oh, really?

JA: Yes.

I: I'm kind of running dry on my labor practice. I think I've plumbed most of the thinking.

JA: Okay. You were also an immigration lawyer.

I: Well, the immigration, as I say, mostly because of the languages, and mostly because of the Italian. But that was one of my specialties. I had a lot of them. One of the things I developed in the practice was the habeas corpus writ. Maybe

I'm using it to keep people from being deported at the last minute. You see, the general -- immigration in terms of law is mostly administrative law -- the workings of the immigration services as part of the Department of Justice. But before the most recent statutes, certainly up to and including the 1965 amendments, which were liberalizing amendments, which opened up more immigration, but you had this system where somebody who is here without the necessary papers, and they usually were tourists who got in legally, but then they over-stayed their stay -- they have a right to a hearing, the American Constitution guarantees, and the hearing is before an immigration judge who is part of the immigration service, but not part of the enforcing service to the immigration. Then, from the immigration judge is an appeal to the Board of Appeals in Washington. That's the legal system. One of the things that happens with that practice is that the astute, experienced practitioner can use it to delay departure from these shores. In the meantime, maybe you figure out if you make it long enough, you can find some other way of keeping that person here. That was really what most of the immigration practice was. It's not the kind of law that makes big, black letter headlines about the rights of people. It really is more the nibbling at the edges of the law. But for practical results, it keeps people here. All kinds of -- some of them drew more interesting moments. I remember a Haitian cook on one of the pretty posh -- well, he may have been down the scale; he may not have been the top chef or anything -- in one of the posh Greenwich restaurants, catering to the rich and famous of Greenwich. He was arrested by the immigration authorities because he had over-stayed his [visa]--

[end of side one, tape two]

JA: And they couldn't make bond. Well, no. They took them there anyway. They took them to Hartford, which was their headquarters. Then they'd keep them if they couldn't make bond, in the jail, in Hartford -- the old jail. The old county jail. They had an arrangement with the state, where they could use the state facility in Hartford. Anyway, one of the relatives of this man came to see me, and

he wanted me to represent him. So I went up to the jail and [laughs] this Haitian was over-dramatic. He kneels on the floor, and he tells me in French, "You are my savior!" Because I was going to get him out. [laughs] That kind of thing. And you had a lot of that. These people, of course, facing authority, and coming out of Haiti, which, at that time, had the Tonton Macoutes, this secret police. One of the people told me in French to say "Good morning" in Haiti is to form a big, political -- "dire bonjour, c'est de faire la politique" -- because of the secret police. So that they came from that, and they came from this country. The immigration inspectors themselves have the worst kind of characteristics of the police. I mean autocratic, arrogant. Of course, they may not be aware they are. But they're "well you're here, you're here illegally" -- boom. But the law had said that any person in the United States who entered legally has a right to the protection of the constitution. Therefore, you got due process. Just like often, the police don't remember that either, because you can't-- and so they create fear in these subjects. You know, this is a strange land. Their English, if it exists at all, is very poor, so they're scared. And to see an authority figure who seems able, who does help them, or seems able to help them, suddenly he becomes -- Jesus Christ -- in reincarnated for them. And I had a lot of those. This is when I developed the use of the writ of the habeas corpus -- by what do you hold this man -- and that once you bring it in, then they have to free them and then they have to argue it afterwards. I was helped there because of Sanpano(sp?), and I imagine the fact that we were both coming out of the Italian minority experience -- you know, you always used to grant me those writs because I went to New Haven Federal Court for him. And that was part of the immigration practice. Interestingly, Newman, who also should have come out of an immigrant experience, but he was much more interested in having great legal debates. I mean, we'd spend an hour discussing the law. But because the law didn't fit, no writs said Newman. But [unclear] Sanpano together, you know? That was part of the immigration practice. One of the things that happened with it -- you force

people into overly authoritarian behavior on the part of the state, and you get methods of evasion. One of the great methods of evasion would be the fake marriage. Well, the real marriage, but never carried out. Marry a U.S. citizen -- one of the people involved in that was a cleric who came out -- it was a Catholic priest out of Haiti, and he worked in a parish in Brooklyn, and he would come to Stamford, in the main church. In the Center of Stamford, they had a mission for Haitians -- Haitian capital. And he'd come and preach on Sunday -- the mass at that. But he also had a racket. He had New York blacks who would marry Haitians, and then they'd apply as spouses of U.S. citizens, to have the status in the country adjusted to a legal status. An interesting case I had -- and there were many women, Haitians, who were domestics in the Greenwich homes, and they'd be coming to this parish -- to this mission -- one of my clients worked in a Greenwich house as a domestic, paid money to -- she came in through Canada, first of all, because of the French -- in Quebec, you talk French. She came in and then she landed a job here, and she paid money to this priest. They put money in an envelope, in the collection plate -- it was for him. [laughs] They didn't hand it to him, so it always went in. So there was a marriage with a black man who was a school teacher in the New York Public School System. Of course, they married, and that was the last they saw of each other. But they established an address from all the papers -- an address -- and what usually happens -- they don't have enough staff really to ferret these things out. Someone gets angry and squeals, and you get them -- that's how these cases work. So my woman was hauled down to New York to the immigration service in New York. I remember this because they were building the twin towers down there at the time, and my car was in a parking lot near there and something fell off and it missed my car. I saw it from the window I was in. But they want to interview her -- "What did you have to eat in the morning? Did you cook breakfast?" And obviously, the answers didn't jive with the answers that the so-called husband had given earlier. That was a trick that they always used. So they were going to depart -- they wanted cooperation

because they wanted to get at this priest. I said, "Well, at this point I advised her not to answer any more questions. I said, "Well, I'm sure that if you have something there, you want to ask questions about the priest, but first we want some promises here. Are you going to forego deportation?" "Oh, no." "Well then, goodbye." [laughs]

I: [laughs]

JA: But that priest was -- eventually, he escaped to Haiti and built himself a nice home, and he's in Haiti. That's what happened. These practices -- both the labor and the immigration practices gave me a heck of a lot of spice.

I: [laughs]

JA: I don't know whether they were a major part of my income, necessarily, but they sure as hell made life as a lawyer more interesting. I think the income came mainly from negligence cases, automobile cases and title searches and that type of thing, with land transactions. **[Tape Off/On]**

I: The two other areas I wanted to ask you about was -- you were President of the International Institute at one point?

JA: Right.

I: That, and also the creation of the Council of Italian Americans.

JA: Yes. What did you do? Did you research with the Connecticut Post?

I: [laughs] They had a clipping or two at the public library.

JA: Oh, they had that "New York Times" story in 1992 -- the "New York Times" story -- yes.

I: And then Lennie Grimaldi's story…

JA: Yes. He wrote that story. Lennie Grimaldi wrote that story. Well, the International Institute was the defender of the immigrant. That's what it was. International Institute was formed as a branch -- oddly, I think, the YWCA, back in the 1930s, and the theory was for the integration of the immigrant into the American society and the defense of immigrant rights. They had things like English classes and some expertise in getting out the various forms and also

helping people to become citizens. So I joined the International Institute, which -- the Bridgeport community kind of had a -- Sarah Morrison was the gal who was the Director of the International Institute when I came there to Bridgeport in the late 1940s. Then I got on the Board. It's clients at that point were mainly the Italians, you know? Now the International Institute still exists. It's clients are, for the most part, are Asiatic, I think. And that basically, was part of my -- the Italian minority experience. It led me naturally to it. But not only that, but it also -- in terms of organization -- I remember when I was in college and I was secretary of the Italian professor there, at my bursary job -- he had, in the hopes of expanding the instruction of Italian in the high schools of Connecticut -- he had organized a group of teachers of Italian. It turned out that for the most part, its connection wasn't because of the teaching, but because of their ethnic heritage. But they, themselves, were teachers, not teaching Italians, so he had a group of -- in high school, the teachers of Italian – of whom were few, plus the teachers of Italian heritage who were school teachers. And I would meet this group, who would meet once a month. He was a bachelor, and he had an apartment in Saybrook, in the Residential College [Yale University]. I'd meet these people. Well, I came to one of their meetings in Bridgeport, and it was held at the International Institute. I had nothing to do directly with immigration, but it kind of -- that's the way Morrison had viewed the International Institute as a part of the community, and that's where they met. And talking about my knowledge of urban life at that point, I walked from the railroad station for a mile-and-a-half to the meeting rather than get on a bus, you know? This was what – either while I was still an undergraduate, when I first met this group, or whether I did it immediately after the war and I was in law school. But anyway, that's where it was. But I was impressed by the fact that Sara Morrison, as a Director, was encouraging these kinds of community activities. And also, with my immigration law, naturally, I was drawn to that part of the activities, so I became a member of the Board and became President of it. That's how I got married -- second marriage. My wife, is

of Italian-Jewish background. After her second child was born, she was looking for work. She had gone to Barnard. She was then working on her Master's in Social Work, of all things, but figured that it would be good for after the kids were growing and in school, for her to resume a professional life. So she volunteered to work at the International Institute, and then, at one point, with her social work studies, she commuted into New York maybe once a week or something. She decided that -- Morrison retired, so the position of Director was open. So Isabella who had been a volunteer -- she decided that maybe that might be a nice way to get back into professional life, so she applied, and I was on the Board of Directors, and one of the people who interviewed. So she got the job, anyway, and then I married her. She was divorced and then I married her. But I think I was President then, when she was hired. And I was President, I think, for three years. We used to have the usual bit that to earn money. We'd have a summer affair. And the summer affair we'd hold out in Newtown with a group of Italian organizations that formed what they called a civic council or something, which then became the Italian Civic Center. Then we'd have our summer money-raising program celebrating immigrant contributions to American life and so forth, and ethnic dances and that sort of thing. We'd have those out in Newtown. That was part of the International Institute Social Life kind of thing. It also was very close to my own immigration law practice because as a result of that, I remember going into New York for a course in immigration law that the Institutes were sponsoring in the New York area. This gal named Edith Lowenstein who taught the course -- she was the lawyer. That was part of the International Institute's whole activity. So, it was really kind of an activity that fit very, very naturally into my ethnic heritage, and into my legal specialty -- both things. That's why -- and I stayed on the Board, after being President, until quite a few years. The marriage broke up in 1973 or so, and by that time I was still on the Board. I no longer stuck around. Well, I guess I left it because of the Worker Compensation Commission job became in 1975. Some of the things I cut. The Italian activities I kept. But some

of the other stuff I cut at that point. I think that was part of it, too. So that was the International Institute. And again, in terms of one's life and a community the size of Bridgeport, I met Poles and I met the Yugoslavs. The Yugoslavs were kind of important in my life. The Yugoslav community -- they were there -- a lot of them became clients for their ordinary legal work. I never did much immigration work for the Yugoslavs, but they were people in the community here, with their buying and selling houses, and automobile accidents and everything. I had Yugoslavs -- and I learned about the difference between the Croats, who spoke the Serbo-Croatian language, but wrote it in the Latin alphabet, and the Serbians, who spoke the same language, but wrote it in the Cyrillic Russian. It's an interesting kind of blend, you know?

I: Yes.

JA: But that part was because of the International Institute. That particular part, I'm sure, wouldn't have happened otherwise. When we'd kind of open the house to all kinds of people during the marriage – We'd have New Year's Eve parties and summer parties, and we'd invite a lot of immigrants. Of course, Isabella herself was an immigrant, basically, so she shared -- she never spoke any Yiddish. Interesting, her mother, --both her parents were doctors, and they met -- her mother was Polish and her father was Russian – out of Yalta no less -- but they came to Padua Medical School because Padua was free of all discrimination, in terms of the medical school, it was famous throughout Europe. But I think her mother spoke Yiddish, and I think her paternal grandmother spoke Yiddish, but I don't think her father ever really learned any Yiddish because in Yalta -- I don't know whether they degraded it or what, but Isabella -- she could do Russian pretty well, and she could do Italian, because of being born in Italy. But, at any rate, that part of our social life -- the people -- the clients who came to the Institute -- would come to New Year's Eve parties, I mean we'd have the kolo -- would be a Serbian dance school. Kolo means circle, apparently, in that language.

I: Yes.

JA: So, we'd have kolo dances on New Year's Eve, at two o'clock in the morning, while I was making spaghetti with garlic and oil and anchovies. You know, that kind of thing. That came out of the International Institute experience without question -- that total broadening. The other one you wanted to do was the Columbus, with the Council of Italian Americans Society?

I: Yes.

JA: All right. One of the things about Italian communities in the Northeast with which I'm familiar, and I think it's the same all over the country -- and I think it's true, also, of other ethnic groups, certainly in Europe -- is the feet in both worlds. That probably with terms of the original immigrants, the vast majority of whom as I said earlier, -- from the Italians, anyway -- were illiterate. **[aside]** That was my mailman delivering something in the box. Anyway, that persisted the next couple of generations, so that the whole Freudian idea of seeking identity [unclear] go into that. So that I -- with my father's organizational experience -- I naturally fell into organizational experiences naturally. Not because they were going to help the law practice, but they usually do have that kind of an effect. But that isn't why. I mean, for instance, coming to Bridgeport and joining the Sicilian Society because on my mother's side I'm a Sicilian. They're very provincial, all the people who could come would be spouses of Sicilians or Sicilians. I mean, that meant all other Italians, also, were excluded. Only Sicilians aren't. So that was called Trinacria, what Virgil calls the Island of Sicily in the Aeneid. It turned out to be the three-cornered island -- Trinacria. It's "corner" in Greek. So I joined that and became President of it at some point, for a couple of years. And I joined the Italian American Civic Council, which was an attempt to join all the various societies. Italy, in the Nineteenth Century, and even at the time of the eventual unification in in 1861 and then in 1870, when the Vatican states were brought into it. And because of the illiteracy and the lack of the level of education and the lack of economic prosperity, was really a group of sections. Very provincial, mountainous terrain didn't help very much. There are mountains right down the

back of the peninsula, not just the Alps up above, but the Apennines all the way down. So that the Italian expression the Italian sociologists talk about is "campanilísmo," the "campanile" is the bell tower of the church. So they were units of society formed within the hearing of the bell tower.

I: Oh.

JA: So this persisted when they immigrated over here, like Sicilian society, only Sicilians can belong. That kind of thing. There were a lot of these societies in Bridgeport in the 1920s and 1930s, representing the regions from which these people came. And so that right after World War II, as an attempt to bring these societies together to one organization, they called it the Italian American Civic Council, which, strangely enough, in terms of American history, was accelerated by its first celebration of the Barnum Festival Parade in Bridgeport. Because some of the Italian groups joined to make a float in the Barnum Festival Parade, and that's spurred activities that try to bring more of the groups together a bit. And that was back -- I'm talking 1947 or 1948 or 1949 -- I forget. The formation of the Civic Council was probably in 1950, and I joined that. And that -- again, money-raising. For its activities, several on the pre-lenten period -- the Mardi Gras -- Tuesday or the Saturday before the Mardi Gras, in terms of all activities it had to -- by fiat – it had to be on weekends, when people were not working. So we had these winter fairs, if you will. We held them in the old Armory. We were ousted from the Armory because the Armory was being redone or something, and we went into one of the church halls. But that was to raise money for the activities of the civic council, to raise money to buy land in Newtown, which was done. And this persisted for some time until the early 1960s, when somebody got the bright idea of what good is it doing us in Newtown? We ought to build something in the city. They used the Newtown land, which by then it had increased the value. They sold it in order to gain money for buying land here and erecting a building which they then -- and they changed the name to the Italian Community Center of Bridgeport. So that's the Italian Community Center. Now,

that, of course, has the Civic Council had failed to do, and as the Community Center also failed to do -- it failed to establish a council of Italian societies. The Italian societies themselves were dying out anyway because the new generations weren't much interested. Television had come on the scene. Television was destroying a lot of the society which had been male-centered -- Friday nights they'd go and play cards, the males. I mean, that's what the society provided them. Plus the end of prohibition gave the opportunity to have a club license which cost a hell of a lot less than a restaurant license, but which was always, by all the societies, totally violated. I mean, they sold it to anybody. But they're not supposed to. And that also was a money maker. But it was still a male activity until World War II, and after World War II, television came in and slowly changed the American mores in that regard. So that that helped in the dying out of the society as an organizational unit. So, therefore, you have a council of dying entities what we were trying to do. But nobody ever gives up on that kind of a dream. And the Italian Community Center -- this great Italian American culture. My brother and a professor of literature -- one of the things that a group of them who were Italians -- they decided there was new culture. Well, it was more than its day -- a sociologist, too. But the Italian American culture as an American and a subculture of the Italians. It is not either, but it is both. And that's true. It's almost tautological to say it. It's true. So this great cultural institution as it turned out up there on Park Avenue, really it had only existed because of its athletic facility. The cultural part of it and the unifying of the various provincial strains -- this persistent dream kept slowly, slowly vanishing. But it existed there. Then comes like 1976 or so, and I said I'd stopped doing the International Institute. Throughout the years, from 1913 on, Bridgeport always had a Columbus celebration. Now, in the 1970s, there was one particular Columbus celebration that left a very bitter taste in the mouth -- a very sour taste in the mouth. The organizer of this small band that was going to celebrate Columbus -- they always used to have the Mayor come and speak or something. The Mayor almost got into

a fistfight with the organizer, and I thought that was very, very bad. I thought that we should do something about that**. [Tape Off/On]** So that, plus some of the older people who are no longer around, still with this dream of joining the societies and the Italian Community Center -- we had a meeting, I think, in 1978, in order to try once again this unification of the provincials. Out of that meeting -- I said one of the things that holds the ethnic community – is as simple as the Columbus celebration -- the Italian St. Patricks' Day kind of thing. And I think that was horrible what happened -- the last time -- so let's adopt Columbus Day as our celebration. That's how that happened, really, and that really has become the principle focus of that council. It hasn't really succeeded in being a council. I mean, individuals have belonged, but in Bridgeport, sociologically speaking, you have this Sicilian group that still is alive, although they're not restricted to Sicilian by any means, and certainly anybody with any Italian connection can join. The group from the Marche, the center of the continent around Pescara -- no, Pescara is Abruzzi – Marche is a little bit north of Abruzzi. The Marche Society is viable. And then some of them weren't provincial societies, really were one of the things that grew in the University of Bridgeport in an attempt to expand its student base that began soliciting people from overseas, students that come, and one of the instruments by which they did that was to organize the Bridgeport Ethnic Communities -- each of them to sponsor a scholar -- to come to get a Master's at UB. That was way back in the late 1960s. And much of that has died, especially when the Moonies took over the University, when it was near bankruptcy. But the Italian part of it -- that has persisted as an organization. And they still bring in a scholar, although we don't have the money for the whole Master's program, but it's meant a couple of months -- the scholar does -- at UB. But that's an organization. And that's an important Italian American based kind of organization. Some of the remnants of the other societies maybe have people coming, but it doesn't really represent the society. It represents individuals, and we're going to change the whole -- the bylaw situation -- and do something that,

as a lawyer, I should have done long ago. Make it a 501(c)(3) organization, so that the contributions are income tax deductible. And have individual members, because really that's what it is now. But it started out as another -- in my fifty years almost here -- another attempt to -- what finally has happened in Italy because of World War II and because of television and because of more prosperity, which, in the Italian life that was represented here in the 1920s, at the end of the immigration, was kind of frozen in history, the life that they were thinking about, like my parents didn't let my sisters use cosmetics. They were born in 1925, 1927, 1929 and 1935. They never used cosmetics. But that was the country villages of Italy of the late 1800s -- that's what they represented. And that's what the provincial societies in Bridgeport represented -- what Italy represented then, sociologically. And the process – of unifying them -- as happened in Italy, with movements that have nothing to do with what we can do over here, you know? And plus, the whole influence -- the tremendous Americanization and American prosperity, literacy and education, and so forth. Plus, television. Television is a great monster. [laughs]

I: I agree. [laughs]

JA: And so we've run that now for almost twenty years, and we've managed to make it a credible celebration. We decided in order to --we were going to just do the parade, but we're going to celebrate all aspects of the Italian or Italian American culture, so we had a Columbus Week, is how we did it. We decided back in 1979. And we still, with some musical or some more scholarly lecture or display at the library, some kind of -- we still do that. This year it took a new tact. We decided we needed more money, so we sponsored a paid entertainer at the Klein [Klein Memorial Auditorium] for that. But it was built around this idea that Columbus was a symbol and the icon kind of thing. And it was worth preserving it for whatever it was worth.

I think that's basically it.

I: Let me just make sure -- would you think that it's right to say that your experience

in the store also contributed to the development of your sort of political experience with people, coming to the store?

JA: No question. In that kind of a community -- and they existed all over -- not only in the Italian communities in the United States, but in the other ethnic communities. But certainly, the small store before the era of the supermarket. Even before the era of the chain store -- I mean, even though the chain stores had begun to exist -- it was a community meeting place. And it certainly was an enrichment. One of the things -- I'm quite fluent in Italian -- having studied it -- I've studied literature and whatnot, but one of the things that through the year that I acquired -- as just an example -- listening to the dialects of the people who came in -- the dialects are themselves languages. They are languages that exist. Really, they exist because of the lack of literacy, because of the lack of communication. Mountain villages -- they kind of grow old, and you can travel Italy and there were the German philologist -- I'm sure there were others – the name was Rolf, who, in the 1920s, I think -- he traveled up and down Southern Italy, and he could tell from the dialects the history of the people. The historical trend -- who invaded when. They all meshed, but you had linguistic isolation, and I get that reflected listening by ear, to the changes of one crazy dialect that had a word for today [sic] and tomorrow – cras. Now, what the hell is cras? Well, cri and cras -- cras is tomorrow and post cras is the day after tomorrow in Latin. And this is what it came down in the dialect after two thousand years, you know? Just for instance, to give you an example. That was an experience that -- except for the store, I would not have had, you know? And I could -- because of the store and because of my own parents, when their people from their parts of Italy came and spoke their dialects, I'd also hear that. But the store would expose me to all kinds of people's linguistics -- well, also, their own lives and their activities. And they'd come into the store, and it's like the country store in the villages of New England. Well, not just New England, but from the nineteenth century country store. You know, they'd come in, they'd discuss -- a boy who started his first year of Yale,

but then he went to West Point. His name was Delano, but his father had been in World War I, and his father had been an Italian immigrant to Westport. He came from the Neapolitan region. His father -- at that point, his experience that maybe he came young enough, plus his experience for a couple years in the Army -- he got a distinguished service cross, he was wounded in the Army. He spoke English with practically no accent, but he'd come in and he'd discuss with my father -- they'd have big, long discussions. Other people would come in -- the store by now means was busy twelve hours a day, even though it was open twelve hours a day or more. But all of these discussions people would have. They'd sit down. There would be a chair right away -- sure, that was very important. There's no question about it. In terms of the fact that my mother was born in this country, and was fluent in English -- that's certainly another very important part of the reason why all seven of her children went to college, although my father was a great educational buff. But certainly her being part of the American life stream -- she wasn't a foreigner to America, even though she's been back and forth a couple times to Italy as a girl -- and an American-born, Italian American marrying an Italian-born one, those marriages -- and I have seen it -- usually gave an advantage to the offspring that was not had by parents, both of whom had been born overseas, you know?

I: Yes.

JA: Those have to have been entered into the making of whoever I am, you know?

I: Yes. I wonder if listening to the people's stories also is what gave you your basic sympathies in life.

JA: Oh, yes. You always sympathize, because everybody was an underdog. There were no rich people coming to the store, you know?

I: It's been fascinating to talk with you, and I really appreciate your taking all this time.

JA: It's my pleasure. I'm not quite certain what you do with all this. But I know I have an oral history in New Haven -- one of the things that I still do -- I still

maintain my New Haven contacts, but there are people connected with Southern Connecticut that have attempted and have put together some oral histories of the Italian community in New Haven. And Southern Connecticut itself has now got a kind of an ethnic archive, most of which is occupied by the Jewish groups of New Haven.

I: Well, Jean Hickey, I think, is the main person. So, she's got the Irish folks in there.

JA: Yes, the Irish folks are there, and the Jews are there, and the blacks are there.

I: But not so much Italians?

JA: Well, the Italians - they were part of the original forming group that formed the ethnic center, but they don't have that kind of documentation. And I think the Jewish group, better than all the groups, the people in the books [unclear], I suppose.

I: Yes.

JA: There are books on New Haven Jewish history.

I: That's interesting.

JA: But anyway, I do know that even before that, the oral history project, although it was promoted by Southern Connecticut -- the oral history project did develop some of the older Italians who are now dead, who have been recorded in the oral history project.

I: My partner's parents are in the same situation as your parents. She was born in the United States -- both Italian Americans -- and he came when he was four. A lot younger than your father. And they're quite elderly. He's in his nineties and she's in her eighties.

JA: One of the great stories that really doesn't have too much to do with your project, but as long as I'm on tape, I might as well -- I go to New Haven in 1938, and I don't have any money, you know? But I had great entertainment, walking around the streets of New Haven. I really learned the streets of New Haven. I was a little bit confused when they began to make one-way streets.

[conversation about New Haven continues off tape]

End of Interview