



Ed Ray Oral History Interviews, June 29, 2015

Title

“From a Queens Childhood to 'Stanford Junior University'”

Date

June 29, 2015

Location

Kerr Administration Building, Oregon State University.

Summary

In interview 1, Ray discusses his family background and provides a detailed description of his youth and upbringing in New York City, including recollections of a few important early influences during his childhood. From there he describes his educational experiences as an undergraduate at Queen's College, his involvement in multiple theatre productions during this time, and his decision to move across the country to pursue graduate studies in economics at Stanford University.

Amidst reflections on his research and teaching during the Stanford years, Ray also describes meeting his wife, Beth, and shares details of her background. He then recalls their move to Ohio State University, where he soon became chair of the Economics faculty. The session winds up with Ray's memories of Beth's activities during their three decades in Columbus, and concludes with a few thoughts on his love of long distance running.

Interviewee

Ed Ray

Interviewer

Chris Petersen

Website

<http://scarc.library.oregonstate.edu/oh150/ray/>

Transcript

Chris Petersen: Okay, today is June 29th, 2015 and it is our distinct pleasure to be sitting with the fourteenth president of Oregon State University, Edward Ray. Ed, I want to thank you on behalf of everybody involved with this project for this opportunity to capture your story.

Ed Ray: Well, it's an interesting adventure we're on. We'll see how happy people are when all is said and done.

CP: Terrific. Well, the principal focus today will be on your years before Oregon State, and as our time flows we'll see how we do. We might get into some OSU stuff as well, but I'd like to begin with your upbringing in New York. You were born in New York City, and my understanding is that you grew up in two different neighborhoods, is that correct?

ER: Yeah, when I was born my family lived in an area called Jackson Heights, which is probably a few miles away from the World's Fairgrounds, or where the U.S. Open is played now. And then when I was nine, almost ten, we moved to another area. It's kind of borderline Jamaica/Flushing, two separate towns, and that's where I lived until I went away to graduate school, basically.

CP: Can you tell me about those neighborhoods?

ER: What you would expect to find in New York. I think the one in Jackson Heights I still remember. I'm a numbers guy: 3534 92nd street, Jackson Heights. We lived in an apartment building. It's probably about maybe only a few stories tall, very old building, they had old coal bins in the basement where they used to store coal and then feed the coal furnaces, back in the, I guess, twenties, thirties and forties. And it was fine, and it's a pretty rough area, actually, and it's really interesting because one of the things I remember when we moved, and we kind of moved in the dead of night, I'm not quite sure why, but we moved in the dead of night and I remember feeling like I was escaping a really, not a very supportive environment. And I mean, I had friends and so forth and so on, but I mean there were a lot of things that went on. I had a brother who was three years older and every time we would have a fight he would tell his friends I could beat them up. So, that was a good way to get me beat up, minding my own business on the way home from school. It was a pretty tough neighborhood.

And then the area we moved to in Flushing/Jamaica was a brand new area that was being developed. This was in 1954 and the project was called Electchester, and it was built by the auspices of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, hence the Electchester. My dad worked as a truck mechanic at night in a place called Welsbach and was one of the early organizers of the Brotherhood of Electrical Workers with Harry Van Arsdale Sr., back in the thirties. And they knew each other well enough that he could call Harry Sr. and talk to him. Years later the son took over the leadership in the union. I'm sure it's gone through many leaders since then, and it's also become the International Brotherhood of Electrical Workers, but it all began in New York City. And the new area we moved to was really pretty nice. It had been pretty much open country.

This was the period when the populations were leaving mainly the Bronx, Brooklyn, Manhattan and moving out on Long Island. In fact, I think it was in 1954 that the Long Island Expressway opened. I don't know how long it had been under construction, but the day it opened, of course, there was gridlock, because you had all these people trying to get into Manhattan, and so it quickly became known as The Big LIE; L-I-E, Long Island Expressway.

Anyway, that was a perfectly reasonable place to grow up. We lived on the sixth floor in an apartment building. I'm still on the sixth floor. And my dad had reasoned that if you lived on the top floor then you didn't have to listen to people walking around above your head. It seemed like a pretty good idea, especially if they had kids jumping up and down or whatever. We did the jumping up and down and tormented the people on the fifth floor, but we didn't have to suffer that.

Anyway, it was a great place to grow up. They had a playground as part of the complex. We were right next-door to public housing project apartment buildings, a place called Promenade. I went to the local elementary school, P.S. 200, for just the fifth and sixth grade, because I was already going on ten, and then went to—there they had middle school, so it was seven, eight and nine. So, I went to Campbell Junior High School, and then from there over to Jamaica High School where I graduated in 1962.

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CP: Did you have occasion to explore the city outside of your neighborhood very often as you grew up?

ER: Oh yeah. I was really fascinated by the city, and a big part of my growing up was connected to the influence of my oldest brother. My parents both had graduated from high school, hadn't gone any further. I had a brother who's since passed away who's ten years older than me, and so when I was nine he was nineteen, and my parents didn't really read, or weren't interested in anything in particular beyond keeping body and soul together, but my brother, sort of wanting a co-conspirator I guess, and starting out in college, he actually had too good a time and dropped out of City College. He went back later. That's a long story, but anyway, he would share the things he was reading and learning about with me. Well, I'm a nine year old kid, ten year old kid and I'm reading *Anna Karenina* and Dostoyevsky's *The Double* and Joseph Conrad's *The Secret Sharer*, *Madame Bovary*, I'm not sure I knew what the heck I was reading, but I just fell in love with reading and literature and the arts.

So, one of the things that I would do, and I don't know how I got started, but even when I was maybe ten or eleven or twelve, I would pack my lunch on a Saturday and I would get on, take the Q65 to Continental Avenue and then the UF train into Manhattan, to 42nd street, and I would go to the 42nd street library and I'd go to the main reading room, which had this huge, beautiful public reading room with a vaulted ceiling, and I would sit there all day reading. And I'd go to the stacks, maybe get a book or even bring a book with me, go out, eat my lunch, come back and then take the train and the bus home at night. And I don't know how I got started on it, but there was just this sense of I was king of the world. I'm in this giant, vaulted reading room by myself, reading and having just a great time.

So, those were part of my adventures. I was telling someone the other day that when I was older, I went to Queen's College - City University of New York, which by the way was probably a mile and a half from where I lived, so I had this strange reality that we lived in this apartment building, and if it hadn't been for an obstructed view, you could see the elementary school I went to for fifth and sixth grade, the middle school I went to for seventh through nine; you couldn't see the high school, but you could see the college that I went to, and I had this sinking sense that my whole life was going to be lived within a two or three mile radius of where we lived. But it was all a great experience.

And so, one of the things I would do when I was in college is I'd go into Manhattan, and as I say, I was telling someone the other day that—because you talk about things you used to do when you were young and you look back on it and they're kind of silly. I would go to Rockefeller Center where the ice skating rink is, and there was a bar. In New York you could drink at eighteen at the time. I don't know if it's still true. But I would go to this bar that overlooked the skating rink and I could get a scotch and soda for eighty cents. And I would sit there, and again, it was sort of like "I'm in charge of the world." It just was a great feeling. Here's a whole city lying before me while I'm having my eighty-cent drink. So, there are a lot of good memories. And I just, anyone who's ever been to Manhattan, it really is extraordinary to see what people have created. That was the part that really impressed me.

And another piece of it that struck me was, as inspiring as all the tall skyscrapers and so forth could be, you could walk down any side street and you were in a different world. I mean, people had their sheets and clothes hanging out on clotheslines, strung from one—you know, five stories up—strung from one side to the other, and you knew that life there was not easy, that they had it—so it's that juxtaposition of incredible splendor and accomplishment and yet people who clearly were barely getting by. But I love the city.

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CP: Tell me a bit more about your parents. It sounds like they came from blue collar roots.

ER: Yeah, my dad grew up, he was born in, I guess they call them dugouts, in Fort Sumner, New Mexico. And his family moved to a place called Mountain Home, Arkansas. My grandmother was half Cherokee and she was very tall and very scary to a little kid. And I didn't see them after I was about nine years old, but it was a very kind of—if you've ever read the story of John Grisham's *A Painted House*, that is exactly the way I remember Mountain Home. And my grandfather ran the local grocery store and gas station in Mountain Home and he had some property in Cotter, near the White River. So, I'd heard about the White River before Whitewater ever became a household word. And one of the fondest memories I have—I just remember being there a couple of times as a little kid—literally walking down a dirt country road barefoot on a scorching hot day. So, I actually have pretty fond memories of that.

CP: You had two brothers, is that right?

ER: Yeah, two older brothers. One, Bob, is still alive, he's three years older than me, and then Bill was ten years older than me. He passed away in about 2009.

CP: It sounds like Bill was pretty important, as far as shaping your—

ER: Yeah, he was a tremendous influence in my life. And I guess, in some ways, I always felt somewhat conflicted about him, because it was hard for me to recognize that to him I was his little brother who was ten years younger, so we were not peers in any sense, and yet because he shared his love of literature and so forth with me, I felt like we were peers. So, we never quite connected as much as I would have liked. But he was a very positive influence. He went to, after he self-destructed in school at City College, he got into Cooper Union on a scholarship. He was a very talented artist, as well, then got drafted in the middle of that, and then when he got out of the Army, they wouldn't give him his scholarship, so he couldn't go. Anyway, to make a long story short, he ended up getting his college degree at, I think, Columbia and then went on. He went on to get a PhD in special education. This would have been back in the late sixties, early seventies.

My other brother was the original rebel without a cause. He—basically my parents agreed to let him go into the Navy so he might finish high school. And he was very bright, he started out at one point he was, I think it was Bedford-Stuyvesant, and it was a really good school, and before that he'd been to one of the Catholic high schools that was also very good. But anyway, he didn't take it seriously, so he went in the Navy and got his GED. He came out and years later he got his associate's degree at Long Island Community College, now Long Island University, got his bachelor's degree at St. Johns, went on, I think to get a law degree and a business—MBA—from St. John's University. So, I used to tell people that I was kind of a reverse inspiration to my older brothers. You realize what all they accomplished educationally had basically—they had a role model in the sense that if that little jerk can do it, how hard can it be? And they did fine and had very successful lives.

My brother, older brother Bill and his wife Madeline both went into teaching. They both taught at the Bank Street School; very progressive, experimental K-12 school in New York, affiliated with Columbia University. So, they did very well. My other brother worked with various companies, typically in insurance, and did, was very successful.

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CP: Do you remember having a hero as a boy?

ER: Oh, probably the most—I mean apart from my brother Bill—I was an absolutely die-hard Mickey Mantle fan. I would, when I was ten or eleven years old and the Yankees would be on television, they had—New York was different because even then, back in the fifties, they had television, they had ABC, NBC, CBS, so a lot of kids didn't see television till near the sixties, but it was on all the time and they would broadcast the Yankee games. And he'd get up at bat and I'd get up at bat. I'd be standing in the living room poised to hit the next pitch. So, he sort of earliest on, he was my biggest hero.

CP: You read a lot it sounds like, are there specific books that made a real impact on you, growing up?

ER: Well, *Crime and Punishment* kind of scared the hell out of me, because when you're young you always, even if you don't realize it, you think you're brighter than you actually are. So, you can really identify with the protagonist in the book, that he thinks he can do anything, that he's not bound by the rules of society, and of course he comes undone at the very end, but that got my attention. And then a lot of other things. I liked Dostoyevsky's *The Double*, it's worth reading. And then over the years I just read a lot of different things that I really enjoyed.

CP: So, what was school like for you? Did you take to it pretty well and flourish, I assume—

ER: Yeah, you know I started out in Catholic school when we lived in Jackson Heights. I went through the first four grades there. It wasn't all sweetness and light. I tend to be high energy and nuns aren't interested in high energy kids. I guess today they would call it ADHD; then they said you had ants in your pants and they'd send home notes to your parents about "he won't sit still, he wouldn't shut up."

I tell one story about Catholic school: the first day of school was my birthday and I was six years old and I was starting first grade, so I was the youngest kid all through school. But anyway, we're sitting in an auditorium, this little girl, Mary McCaffrey, I think her name was, was sitting there, she's crying inconsolably and her mother's trying to calm her down. Then finally they ask the parents to leave, we're going to go upstairs and she's walking ahead of me on the stairs and she's crying and I remember telling her "Mary, you shouldn't cry, school's really great, I read all about it," because I had these books. I don't know if it was Dick and Jane or whatever the version of the time was, but here are all these kids having a good time making things out of clay, doing nifty things. Anyway, so she's crying, I'm telling her "it's great, I read the book, it's really good." And I thought starting school on my birthday had to be the best present a person could ever have. I was the luckiest guy in the world. Anyway, this nun comes over and smacks her in the face, and I remember thinking to myself "that wasn't in the book," and I think from there I got a little bit of an education that the book wasn't quite accurate, at least as far as Catholic school went.

And then when we moved, now I'm in the fifth grade and I'm in public school and I knew everything from fourth grade that all the kids in fifth grade knew, so for about six months I was probably the smartest kid in my class, and then things started leveling out. But I always loved schools. I always liked learning, I mean I'd always been curious. One of the things that concerns me about young people is how do you instill curiosity in somebody? I mean, there are many challenges today that young people face in making it through to graduation, but people who are curious find ways to get things done. People who aren't are awfully hard to help. And I don't know what makes one person curious and another person not. I suspect if you could push the right buttons and find out what they find intrinsically interesting you could reach any child. I mean, I've been in education all my life, I think. And so, there has to be that sort of fundamental belief that everybody's educable if you can just find the secret formula.

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But I was always curious, so I always loved school. I always worked at it. But I was a typical kid. I mean, I played baseball and basketball, a lot of basketball growing up. We used to travel around the city, we'd go to Harlem and Brownsville and out to the Rockaways, whatever, played pick-up basketball games, played them in our own neighborhoods. We had these two huge housing projects, lots of kids of every age there, so I had a whole host of people to play sports with and be involved with. So, I just kind of enjoyed it.

I've always been the kind of person, I tell people even now that generally I always think I'm doing fine, even when objective evidence would suggest otherwise, and so I just kind of toot along, sleep well at night, don't have a lot of regrets, or I don't second-guess myself a lot except to try to, when I make mistakes, as everybody does, to learn from them and pay attention to how did I get that wrong. But I mean, in sort of a state of nature I am basically a very positive, happy person. And I went through my whole school experience with that kind of sense.

CP: You were in the choir in the high school and there's sort of a sub-theme of performing arts here.

ER: Yeah, and I don't know where that came from. I was never in the choir. What I did do, and this was sort of a sign of the times; I was in a couple of singing groups. Everybody in the fifties, sixties wanted to be the next, I don't know, Four Seasons or whatever, and so I was in singing groups with characters and we would sing at dances and stuff like that. And I did some acting in college, that's really where I got into the arts probably the most, doing a number of plays while I was there. But something happens at twelve or thirteen when your voice changes, it's no longer angelic, it's a little scratchy and irritating. So, I took—while I still enjoy singing and love music and always have, I don't think you'd get a lot of people to show up to pay to hear me.

CP: Did you have a job growing up?

ER: The first job I ever had of any—that you could actually call a job, I didn't have until after I graduated from high school. In high school and before, I would help a friend who had a paper route and we would deliver papers, and believe it or not, he had like a hundred and sixty-five papers, but a lot of it was houses really close together and stuff. So, we would split them up, I'd help him do that. I did that on and off.

The first job I ever had was in a women's apparel store after I graduated from high school that summer. And this guy told me he was—you know, I was too young to sort of catch on to the whole deal, but he was going to pay me cash and

I would have odd working hours. Part time one day I'd work four hours, the next day two, the next day eight, and I was kind of a jack of all trades. I would pack stuff, unpack stuff, hang stuff on the racks, et cetera, et cetera, et cetera. Anyway, so this was before I'd ever heard about economics as economics. This was my first economics lesson. This guy tells me he was going to pay me a dollar an hour. So, I go home, I come in the next day and meanwhile I heard on the radio that President Kennedy had announced that the minimum wage was being raised to a dollar fifteen. So I go in the next day and I said "you know, I heard on the radio that the president said that minimum wage is going to be a dollar fifteen an hour" and I just looked at him expecting him to say "oh yeah, well I'll pay a dollar fifteen, what the heck," and he looks at me and he says "well, you have an interesting decision to make here." I said "what's that?" he says "well," he said, "you need to decide if you're willing to work for me for a dollar an hour or be unemployed for a dollar fifteen an hour." I worked for a dollar an hour.

CP: At what point did you start thinking about college?

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ER: You know, I think, I don't know if it was in the water or whatever, but everyone who lived around me, by and large, came from blue collar families. I had a friend, Ira Krause who sadly passed away in 2007. His mother died when he was twelve, and even though I had two older brothers and he and I were basically the same age, I kind of adopted him like my other brother. And so, really growing up we went through middle school and high school and even college together. His dad was a judge. I don't know what kind of judge. I think a municipal court or something. But that was about the only white collar person I knew. Virtually everybody else, given the nature of the project, the people that I knew almost all worked for the union, and that meant they were electricians or mechanics or did other sort of blue collar jobs, and the sense among all the people I knew was you haven't got a dime, so if you want anything in this life, you better get an education.

And so, it never occurred to me that I wasn't going to get an education, even though I had no idea what that meant. So, when I went to college, I mean nobody in my family knew what I was dealing with or could give advice, but it just was always understood that I would just keep going, and that was fine with me because I was curious enough. I mean, there was never a point in which I felt I'd learned enough, so I could stop. So, the idea of being in school forever, which in fact it turns out I've been, was always very congenial to me. Being around people who were smart and learning and interested in things and could introduce me to new things, I mean how good is that?

So, it never occurred to me that I wouldn't go to college. And I think that was true of a lot of my peers, and that's part of what got lost somewhere when the Vietnam War started up in '65 on; the world got a lot meaner and a lot different than it was when I was coming of age. When I was coming of age, it was a pretty good time.

CP: Queens College, I gather, was very accessible in a lot of ways. Was that pretty much your choice?

ER: No, I actually, I mean I had no choice. My parents had nothing, and I thought about it, and I think I even applied to a few schools, but I literally had nothing, so if I had gone to a really good school—and I don't think my grades were that great anyway, they were good but not startling—if I had gone to a really exclusive school, I would have been the guy who couldn't go anywhere, who had the crummy clothes, who had no money to buy pizza. I mean there just, there was no way. I mean, Queens College really was the only serious option that I had. And I was fine, I didn't really care about it.

The cost was twenty-four dollars per semester. It was not open admissions at the time. It became open admissions, kind of fell on hard times, and I think they've gotten back to sort of criteria for getting in. I did well enough to get in; twenty-four dollars per semester I could get a college education. If it hadn't been for that, I have no idea how I would have managed to get through, finance my way through college.

So, I mean I get it for students today who have next to nothing or whose families are struggling trying to put maybe several kids through college. My parents had nothing, so it was the summer jobs that allowed me to be able to afford college. And after my first year, I worked in a summer camp, an eight-week summer camp with a bunch of little kids, lot of funny stories, but I'll spare you that. And then the next three summers I worked for Trans World Airlines. They had a terminal on 42nd street and 10th avenue. I don't know if it—if it's still there, it's not Trans World, it's maybe American or United. And I worked there summers and I remember one summer, it may have been the last one, I made the incredible

sum of ninety-five dollars a week. I mean I was really, felt quite wealthy. But I could save that money and then that money would help defray the costs of going to college. For kids today, I mean there's no way they can work enough to do well in school and at the same time pay for things. So, a lot harder unless they have family or Pell grants or something to help them make it through.

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CP: You majored in math?

ER: Yeah, by default. So, let me give you a funny story. I started out as a chemistry major, and flash back to high school, there was this fellow, Dr. Phifer who was the head of the science program at Jamaica High School, and somehow I ended up in this class, it didn't really make sense, with all of the really smart kids in the school. There were twelve hundred and thirty-five students in my graduating high school class, so here was this class History of Science, and I think it ran for the whole year, and Irving Epstein, who was the valedictorian of the twelve hundred and thirty-five, was in that class and I was in that class, along with a lot of really smart, neat people.

Anyway, toward the end of our senior year, I went in to see Dr. Deerlund, or Dr. Phifer, and he asked me, he said "well, what are you going to do when you go to college?" and I said "I don't know," I said "you know, it's really, it's kind of depressing that you think about Leonardo and others and they could do everything, they could study everything." And it was already dawning on me that one has to make choices, that if you're going to be an expert in one thing, there are whole areas of human experience you know nothing about, or it's very superficial, and that you had to make choices. And I was lamenting that that was pretty unfortunate. And he allowed as how, given my situation in society today, that the counterpart of that, if I had lived at the time of Leonardo, I would have lived in a village somewhere, illiterate and ill-spoken, living a brutish life, and I would be dead by the age of thirty. So, I was kind of like oh, okay, so maybe having to make choices is not such a bad idea.

So anyway, he was very inspiring and I went off to college thinking I was going to be a chemistry major and I was in the chemistry honor society in the beginning of my second year and discovered I didn't like lab and I didn't want to be a doctor, so I couldn't quite figure out why I was majoring in chemistry. So, I just started taking different things, and I always liked math, so I just kept taking math courses. And they didn't have academic advisors at the time; they had guidance counselors. So, I actually signed up to see a guidance counselor, and after talking to her about two or three times, she said "why are you here?" She said, "you're a very nice young man, but why are you here?" and I said "I don't know what I want to major in" and she said "well, I'm not here to help people decide that, I'm here for people who really need my help, and frankly you're taking up my time." So, I got fired by this guidance counselor.

So, I would ask people "well, what should I take?" because my family had no idea. They had no college experience. So, people would say "well, if you need a prerequisite for something, it's got to be math and science, so keep taking math and science. So, I kept taking math and science and I had a year and a half of chemistry and I had a year of biology and a year of physics and all this mathematics, and then I got to my senior year and it's like ooh, I don't have a major. And I had taken economics in my junior year, some courses, and I really liked them, and I was doing theater, so I was kind of a—I was living a good life, I was enjoying life, but I realized I don't have enough time to major in economics or something else. So, I looked at my transcript and I said "well, math is the only thing I've taken enough of that I could take two or three more semester courses and I'm done." So, I went over to the Math department, declared a math major in the fall of my senior year. And they looked at it saying "yeah, I guess it works."

So, now I had my first faculty advisor ever, a mathematician. So, I go to see him and he looks and he said "I guess it works," he says, "what do you want to do next year?" And I said "you're talking to a guy who just figured out his major fall of his senior year, why would you imagine I have any idea what I want to do next year?" He said "well, what do you like?" And I said "well, I started taking economics, I really like that, I'm going to take some more economics my senior year, I'd like to learn more economics. He says "well, you have to go to graduate school." I said "well, what's graduate school?" He says "that's where you study more economics." So, "okay, how do I get there?" He said "well, you got to take this exam, it's called the Graduate Record Exam; you better hurry up and sign up because it's going to be soon."

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All I'd had was introductory micro and macroeconomics. This was my foundation. So, I got to take this advanced placement exam in economics, along with other things, and he said "and then you have to apply to graduate schools." I was like "well, where should I apply?" He said "how should I know? I'm a math professor, I don't know anything about economics. So, go to the library and look it up." So, I go over to the library, I look at all these catalogs, everybody's sort of MIT and Chicago and Princeton and Yale and Harvard, and so I apply to all of these places and then I ran into this woman that I knew in high school who was at Wellesley. I don't know whatever happened to her. Her name was Mary Huff. But I actually ran into her in the library in the end of fall semester, and so we start talking, it turns out she majored in economics and she's going to go to graduate school in economics, and I'm all excited, I'm going to apply to graduate school too, and she said she already heard from Princeton she got rejected. Well, Mary Huff was number ten in my twelve hundred and thirty-five member high school graduation class, so I found that pretty depressing.

I also found out, and this was the first time I really appreciated, because it was harder to see at the time, discrimination against women. I said "well, how could you not get into Princeton?" And she said "because they don't accept women and they said unless there's someone there that I have to study with to get the degree I want, I need to go somewhere else." So, I was a little bit shaken by if Mary Huff can't get in, I can't get in, and also that that just seemed incredibly stupid. How could they not accept somebody of the caliber of Mary? So, I decided well, I need an ace in the hole. You know, maybe Harvard isn't ready for this guy from Flushing, New York to show up at their front door.

So, I went back to the library going through catalogs, looking for a place that I could go to and I found this catalog and it had a picture of a road lined with palm trees called Palm Drive, and I had never been west of Philadelphia, so it was like—and at the time, it's hard maybe to reflect on now, but California was kind of La-La Land. You know, they were in a totally different time zone, it was like Disney was there, it was like it didn't really exist, Hollywood. So, somewhere out in California, so they have—I'd never seen a palm tree. So, I thought how bad could that be, I wonder if this place has a graduate program. It did, in economics, so I could go there and study economics, and it was called the Leland Stanford Junior University. Well, in New York they don't have community colleges, they have junior colleges. So, I thought well maybe there's something like a junior university, and if there is, how hard can it be to get into a junior university? And they have a graduate program in economics. This is perfect, this is my ace in the hole.

So, I applied Stanford University, Leland Stanford Junior University, and then later in the year—in fact, I was going to go to Purdue, because they had offered me a five year fellowship. I mean, they basically guaranteed me a PhD, although I didn't know what a PhD was or if I wanted one. I just knew I wanted to study more economics. So, if somebody had said "you should get a masters," I would have said "okay." I wasn't totally committed. So, then I heard from Stanford, so I'm talking to my professors and they're sort of—I'd gotten to know more econ profs and they said "well, where have you heard from? Oh Purdue, well yeah, that'd be great. Full ride? Well, that's terrific, anywhere else?" I'd say, "Well, there's this other one, it's kind of my ace in the hole, but I'm not so interested in that. They only offered me a fellowship for the first year." They'd say "well, where is that?" I'd say "oh, it's called the Leland Stanford Junior University" and they'd say "well where is that? I've never heard of it," and I'd say "I don't know, some place called Palo Alto, California." "Stanford, you're talking about Stanford?" That's how I ended up there.

CP: Before we move on, I have a colleague who insists that I ask you about your acting credits.

ER: Ah. Well, I would say that I did play, I played the griffin in *Alice in Wonderland* and I think I mastered the tolerable Cockney accent as the half-bird, half-lion. That was a lot of fun. The first play I ever did was *Detective Story*, and I was taking—everybody had to take speech, I mean this is how I ended up in theater there, although I'd done some acting in lower levels. But this fellow, Dr. Deerlund, was the head of the Speech department and I was in his speech class and he really prided himself on understanding, on being able to peg dialects and where people were from. So, he'd go around the room, well of course all these kids had grown up in Queens; this was not a great challenge. So, he calls on me and has me say something and he said "well, clearly you grew up in the Midwest." "No, I've lived here all my life." And it's because of the diphthong in the way you pronounce vowels.

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And so, he was quite shaken by that, and I think it's because my dad still had elements of a southern accent his whole life, and so I just, and I have an ear for dialects. I tend to fall into rhythms. Whoever I'm with, I can sound like I'm from eastern Oregon or from Manhattan or from Los Angeles, depending on how long I'm with somebody just having a

conversation. So anyway, the long and short of it was there's a Maxwell Anderson's play *Detective Story*, there's a fellow in there, Arthur Treasure, who's supposed to have come from a place called Ann Arbor, Michigan to Manhattan and he gets arrested stealing a loaf of bread. Well, he recommended that I go try out for this play, and I think it was because I was the only one in Queens who didn't sound like I was from Queens. So, I think I got recommended to go there, and I think I actually got the part because I was the only one who didn't have a New York City accent.

Anyway, so that was the first play that I was ever in, and then after that I ended up, I think *Alice in Wonderland* may have been the second one, and then in the summer between my junior and senior year, we did *Under the Yum Yum Tree* out at Kennedy Airport, a place called—it had been Idlewild before it was Kennedy, so it's called the Idlewild Players and it was theatre-in-the-round and it was in an old Air France hanger. And everything was off the books and paid in cash.

Then we did another one, *Charley's Aunt*, which is a late nineteenth century—set in the late nineteenth century England, and I was Brassett, the butler; my hair parted in the middle, the whole deal. And then in my senior year—oh, and we did *A Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*. So, I think the sequence was *Detective Story*, *Funny Thing Happened on the Way to the Forum*, *Under the Yum Yum Tree* and then I did *Two for the Seesaw*. Now that's really interesting, that's sort of the high point, because we did it in theatre-in-the-round and it's a two-person play. It's a three-act, two-person play and there's nowhere to hide. And so, that was pretty neat. And then *Alice in Wonderland* was in spring of my senior year.

So, I ended up actually majoring in math and minoring in economics and theater, which I think was pretty usual at the time. Now, today students have three majors, which I find mind-boggling, but I mean I was kind of all over the place and I was having a great time.

CP: Yeah, and sort of early training too, for becoming a public figure a little bit later on in your life.

ER: Well, I don't know. I mean, I was, never had trouble talking, as you can imagine.

CP: So, you get into this junior university on the other side of the country, tell me about the adjustment to the west coast.

ER: It was pretty amazing. I'll tell you a quick funny story about my assimilation. I get out there and I don't have a car, so I find an—I go to the housing office, I don't know what I imagined I was going to be dealing with, but I go to the housing office figuring well, I've never been west of Philadelphia, how hard can this be? So, I find a motel in downtown Palo Alto, I don't even know if they have them anymore. Well I have to walk to the university housing office, and I don't know what I was expecting, but all they had was a book of listings. Well, I'd never been there, I had no idea where anything was, so the addresses were meaningless to me. This is like in August of that school year.

So, now I got to hoof it around to try to find a place. I actually found an apartment on Hamilton Avenue, which is one street over from University Avenue, and so now I got to go get a bicycle, because I need some transportation, so I'm walking downtown and I'm on one side of the street and I went into a store, it must have looked like they might have such things, and the guy says "no, no, you got to, right across the street there, there's a bicycle store." So, I walk out of there and I walk across the street. Well, I hear this siren and it's a policeman on a motorcycle telling me I had just jaywalked. Well, in New York you would never stop for the light, because if you won't go in the crosswalk, people will kill you. You're always jaywalking.

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So anyway, he gives me a warning ticket for jaywalking. And there's more to that story, but I'll leave it out. But anyway, so about a month later, I'm going for my driving test. I go in, the guy says "do you have proof of residence?" I've only been here a month, how can I have proof of residence? I said "I don't have any bills or anything yet, I just moved here." He said "well, you can't take the written exam if you don't have proof of residence." So, I go through my wallet to see if I have anything; the only thing I have is this jaywalking warning ticket, and so I pick out the ticket and I show it to him, I said "is this okay?" He said "oh yeah," he says "well, we're not testing you for walking, so I guess it's okay."

So, he lets me take the jaywalking ticket as proof of residence and go take the written exam. So, I do the written exam, I come back and he's scoring it and he starts laughing. I said "what are you laughing at? This is really important." He says "I'll tell you when I'm done. Let me finish doing this." So, he finishes, he says "you only got one wrong." I go "wow," he said "yeah, that's actually pretty good." So, I said "well why were you laughing? That wasn't very nice," and he says

"the one you got wrong was when you're walking on a road and there's no sidewalk, do you walk facing traffic or with the traffic? And you said with the traffic, and the answer is facing traffic." And I said "in New York, they have streets." So, that was the beginning of my assimilation into California culture.

CP: Well, it sounds like you had an inkling in your mind about economics, but maybe not a real focus or direction by the time you had gone off to school, but obviously that changed at some point. Tell me a bit about kind of your academic progression at Stanford.

ER: Well, I think you just, it's like many things in life, you're just, you're now in a different culture. And the culture signals, whether overtly or not, very clear signals about what success and failure mean. So I mean, you get there and you learn very quickly that there are going to be these qualifying exams at the end of your first year, and if you don't pass them, then you can get your master's degree and go on with your life. If you pass them, then you can work toward your PhD, even if you don't know what the hell you'd do with a PhD. So, you get caught up in that, and then you have professors and courses and they're all having you read peer reviewed journals and sharing their own ideas with you and you get caught up in that culture, and then that's what you want to do.

So again, I don't think there was a lot of strategizing or deep thinking on my part. I enjoyed what I was doing, it wasn't—I didn't have to force myself to study or be interested. And so, I just think I kind of drifted along. When it's all over, you got a PhD and now you've got a job and you're doing what your professors were doing. I think I got caught up and dragged along in that whole culture.

CP: Did you have a mentor?

ER: Not so much, but I had people that I really liked. One was a fellow named Lorie Tarshis who taught one of the macro courses, so it was Keynesian economics, and he had actually studied with Keynes at Cambridge. He was older at the time, so back in the thirties he'd studied with John Maynard Keynes. And then this fellow Ed Shaw was another one. I did have a lot of regard for him. He taught money and finance and had written some books, he and another fellow. Gurley and Shaw was a book that was well-known at the time on finance and economic development.

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Then there was this fellow Emile Despres who had this really deep voice and would talk like this when I first got there, and he was chair of the department. What I found out later is they rotated every year; someone else had to be chair of the department because nobody wanted to be chair of the department. Anyway, those were three people that I really admired. And then my advisor Ron McKinnon was a good guy and I liked him. I got to know and like a number of the professors.

CP: Tell me about the research that you did, was it two separate tracks from masters to PhD or was it all kind of one flow?

ER: Yeah, no, it's totally different because really what happens after the first year, you start taking fields of concentration, deciding what areas you want to focus on. The first year is sort of the core courses that everybody has to take, so people in the master's program might take one field; I think in the PhD program you had to take two or three and then you had to—and you took, I think there were more econometrics courses, statistics, things of that sort that you had to take, and then you would do the dissertation, usually, if you were on track beginning in your third year. So, the hope was you would be done within four or five years of having shown up.

CP: And you focused on?

ER: International trade was what I ended up—and I was always interested in economic development and I've always loved history. So, if you look at the body of work, all the papers that I published, they tended to be on either straight international trade, micro trade, not financial trade, some work in financial markets and economic development and some economic history stuff. I had a colleague when I first got to Ohio State who, Ben Baack, he was an economic historian, and I taught international trade courses, undergraduate, graduate and so forth, some other courses. But he and I did a few papers together in economic history, mostly nineteenth century or early twentieth century. I knew how to do some statistical analysis, he knew some of the literature and what had been done. So, we did several papers together, one on the

rise—I mean the rise of the military industrial complex in America, the adoption of the personal income tax, you know, two or three different things.

CP: Your first teaching experiences, I assume, were at Stanford?

ER: Yeah, although in graduate school, I mean, they gave you money but they didn't give you that much money. So, I did teaching on the side. I taught at a place called Hayward State University, which is now California State University, East Bay. And I taught at Santa Clara when it was a little not much of anything place. It's now, obviously, a major university. But there would be a course here, a course there. I think I got paid somewhere, I remember the handsome sum of six hundred dollars to teach a course. So, I got some teaching experience there. And actually, one of the best experiences I had was in my third year, I think it was; maybe it was my fourth year, there was this fellow Hayne Leland who taught the first year graduate micro sequence as opposed to the finance, money macro sequence. So, the first quarter, first class of the new entering class, I signed up with him to be his grader. And he would get problem sets every week. Well, here comes the first problem set and I said "well, where's the answer key?" He said "well, just figure it out." And then I would have to have a recitation session with all these first year graduate students. I'm only like in my third year at the time, I think.

So, I killed myself trying to figure out all the ways that someone would try to answer each of the questions so that I could understand maybe where they went wrong, if they did, or maybe if they'd found some alternative way to get there. So, I never worked so damn hard in my life as I did in that course. But as you know, if you want to know something, teach it. You will know it. If you're conscientious, you will know it chapter and verse. So, I worked like hell. And it was a great experience and I got to know some of the students in the class and became friendly with them, but it was, boy it was quite the experience. So, I actually had done a fair amount of teaching on the side in situations like that at part time while I was in graduate school. So, I had an idea what it was all about.

CP: And you met Beth at Stanford.

[0:55:22]

ER: Yeah, in my third year. We, I had a friend, in fact I just saw him a couple of weeks ago, he and his wife and another couple, the three of us, the two men and I, had all started graduate school together. And this fellow, Steve's wife was a year behind us I think, in Economics. They both got their PhDs. We all got our PhDs. Anyway, he was engaged, this would have been just before our third year, and his fiancée dumped him. So, he was depressed as hell, and so I was trying to figure out how to cheer him up. So, we would do things.

One of the funny stories is there's a bowling alley at Stanford, I don't know if they still have it, but I said "well, let's go bowling, you know, we're just sitting here looking like a jerk, let's go bowl." So we go bowling. I would say over my lifetime my bowling average is probably between a hundred and five and a hundred and twenty, probably closer to a hundred and five. So anyway, we go bowling. So, we're bowling and I'm on course for a two hundred game, and of course I blow it at the end and I only end up at like one eighty-eight or something, and then I realize he's depressed as hell because he just bowled ninety-two or something like that. So, this plan of mine to get him out of the dumps wasn't working at all well.

So, then it turned out this other friend of ours had a roommate. They were in the College of—his roommates—in the Business school and he was rooming with them and they were going to throw a party, so he invited us, Steve and I, to go to this thing. And what I didn't realize, Beth was just getting ready to start law school, and her friend Ingrid, or Helga, had been invited to this party but she didn't want to go alone, which is understandable, starting law school, so she told Beth she wanted to go with her so she wouldn't be by herself. So anyway, we all show up at this party. So, that's where I met her, and I was pretty taken with her. So, I invited her, being a suave, debonair New Yorker, to go to the Economics picnic before school started. And so, that was our first date and that's how we met.

We got—so, we met each other at the end of September, we were engaged on December 8th and married on the following June 14th and married almost forty-five years. So, I said in the memorial service for Beth that anyone who doesn't believe in love at first sight, you're selling yourself short. It really is possible.

CP: What was her background?

ER: She had grown up in a small place called Prairieton, which you'd be hard-pressed to find on a map. I think it was incorporated, but maybe not. Maybe three hundred people lived in this area. About ten miles from Terre Haute, Indiana, she grew up, went to a school called Honey Creek High School. Must have been a Honey Creek river. And they were known as the Honey Creek Honeybees. And she was valedictorian. Her brother Michael, her older brother, had been valedictorian and he went to Rice University in Texas on a full-ride, four year scholarship. She also got a full four year free ride, full ride scholarship and went to Rice. They had some family in Houston, relatives, so they had people they could connect with if they had a problem. So, she went to Rice and then on to Stanford Law School, and that's how we met.

It was really funny, because I had misremembered at some point and I had said to someone that she had like an eight hundred on the math SATs or whatever they're called, and so I mentioned that to her, she said "I didn't have eight hundred on there." I said "well, what did you have?" "Seven-ninety." I said "oh. What'd you have on the English SATs?" "Eight hundred." So anyway, she was very smart. And a very sweet lady.

[1:00:04]

CP: Something that's been coming up a lot in our interviews with multiple people is the tumult and cultural context of the Vietnam era in the 1960s, and you were at Stanford in the late sixties. What do you remember about that time period that's in that context?

ER: Well, and remember I graduated in '66, so I mean Vietnam was building up, building up, building up. I was very much opposed to the war, mainly because what I saw, and I saw it again in Iraq, was you don't fight a war for a tie. You know, I would have thought Korea taught us that, but apparently not. So, there was no clearly defined mission in Vietnam. So, I was really opposed to the war because it seemed to me that people were dying for a failed proposition. There was no logic behind it. And you read now in later years that LBJ knew in '65 we couldn't win, but it was all politics. I mean, how do you send people to their death over politics?

So, the overriding sense I had then that I've never lost was that this was an incredible, stupid tragedy played for political ends and that people were just used up in the process, which is terribly wrong. And that it was terrible that soldiers were treated the way they were. They came back and they were abused and mistreated and the only thing they were guilty of was believing in their country and doing what their country had asked them to do. They were literally ready to die for their country, and for that they were treated with dishonor. So, those were the two most powerful feelings that I had.

I remember one time we went to—this was funny—we went to what would have been sixty, I think it was '68, may have been '69, it was '68, but they had demonstrations in cities throughout the United States against the war and Beth and I went to the one in San Francisco and they had a rally in Golden Gate Park. And the featured speaker was a senator named Wayne Morse, and we went to that, and again, you sort of remember certain things because of the juxtaposition they provide, but I remember telling Beth, you know, we're talking about they thought there were, you know, the police were saying a hundred thousand, other people said two hundred thousand in San Francisco, and equal-size crowds in New York and Chicago, Philadelphia, handful of cities. And I remember telling her, it was a beautiful sunny day, Sunday afternoon, I said "do you realize there are more people in America watching pro football games than there are marching against the war?"

That's what it was like.

So, we were a very divided nation, and not just in terms of the politics, but in terms of the lives people were living. People were going to Sunday football games, people were protesting the war, people were dying for no discernable, obtainable objective. It was a very, very conflicted time.

CP: Yeah.

ER: You know it's funny, because there have been television shows, I think, about the sixties, twenty years ago or something, retro on the sixties, and the sixties, I mean Malcom X was murdered. You know, you think about the three young kids killed in Mississippi, Medgar Evers, John Kennedy, Bobby Kennedy, on and on and on. It was cities burning.

You know, Watts, Detroit. It was not a happy time. It was happy maybe for some, but it's just interesting. Again, that juxtaposition of conditions of life. You see the skyscrapers and you go down a side street and they're two different worlds, side by side.

CP: Well, you finished up at Stanford around 1970 and you went directly to Ohio State and you were there for thirty-three years. Tell me about - how'd you get the position at Ohio State?

ER: I just applied to a number of places for jobs. I mean, you go into the job market, it was a terrible time. I mean, the academic market kind of tanked in 1969 and then '70, '71 through the early seventies. It was pretty tough to get a job. So, they offered me a job. I was not quite done with the dissertation, but my advisor, Ron MacKinnon, was going to Brookings for the year, taking a sabbatical year. So, it didn't make a lot of sense for me to sit around in Palo Alto if he's in Washington, D.C., so I figured I may as well see whether I could get a job or not. So, I went into the job market, got a job at Ohio State.

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CP: And what were the initial duties of this position? Just a junior faculty - teaching, research?

ER: Yeah, well yeah. I mean, just do it all and here are four or five different preparations. I remember going to see Ed Shaw, was appalled that I got my teaching assignments in June or something. We're driving across the country in August to get there and I complained that I had like five courses I had to teach. I think we taught, maybe we taught six, I don't even remember, but I had like four different preparations. And he said "well, that's their way of helping you understand your place in the structure. You're the guys who've got to do four different things."

CP: What was the environment like at Ohio State in those early years?

ER: Well, the first year I was there was the year after the riots. So, in fact one of my first classes, yeah so I was pretty young, obviously, one of my first classes I talked to the—finished the class and this one student wanted to talk on the way back to my office and we're walking along and he's telling me about how they'd had the riots in '69, you know, Kent State, and they closed down the University; Ohio State had closed down, like a lot of places, and they just sort of wrote off the courses for kids, because they couldn't continue beyond, I guess the middle of May. And so, we're having this conversation as if just two guys having a conversation, and he said something like "Dr. Ray" and I said "you can just call me Ed." He goes "oh, I'll call you Professor Ray." I realized here's this gulf that's never going to go away; that I'm not a student anymore and I'm perceived as something else.

But now, the first year was a little crazy because we had one very conservative colleague who, because they didn't know what would happen a second year, we just had the Kent State killings, so this guy was counseling at a faculty meeting that we should all have guns and that we should, if somebody causes a demonstration, we should use our influence on the other students to fall upon them and beat them up and throw them out the door. So, that was a little hard to take. Fortunately, it never came to that, so it was fine.

I shared an office with two other faculty. One was this Ben Baack, who I mentioned, and I think has since retired from Ohio State, and another was a fellow Don Parsons, and I just saw him and his wife and daughter a couple of weeks ago. He's at George Washington. He left Ohio State, went there and is still working there. Yeah, so it was good. I mean, I enjoyed what I was doing.

CP: You became a father during this time period, as well.

ER: Mhmm, yeah; '75 Stephanie was born and '79, January, Katie, and then '81 Michael. So, then I went through the ranks pretty quickly. I got promoted after my fourth year and then promoted again my sixth year. So, it wasn't a lot of sweat about tenure and promotion. I mean, by the time I looked around, I was a tenured professor and I was chair of the department. You've heard about the academic wars that are plentiful in academic circles. Well, we had this guy who was a total incompetent as chair who wanted one of his cronies to take over if he stepped down, because the senior people were forcing him out, so then all the junior people got together and they decided I should be department chair, not particularly asking me. So, I was confronted with would I stand to be chair or not, figuring if I didn't do it and this other guy became

chair, I wouldn't want to stay anyway. So, it was one of these conflicted things. So, I went "alright, so I'll stand to be chair" and ended up being chair of the department.

[1:10:12]

I was chair at age thirty-one, so I think at the time I was the youngest department chair they'd ever had at Ohio State. And I did that for sixteen years, so I guess I liked it, and toward the end of that time it was pretty clear to me it's getting a little spooky, because I had people who I had hired at the entry level who were now full professors who still had to ask Ed if they could do something, because he was chair. And I just had the sense of you know what, they shouldn't have to ask Ed for the rest of their lives. So, I didn't know what the hell I would do, I just said "that's it." So, four four-year terms, then I would just give it up.

CP: What was Beth doing during the time besides being a mother?

ER: She had, when we went to Ohio State, she hadn't finished law school. After a year of law school she worked in legal aid in East Palo Alto, and then when we moved to Columbus, she announced that she wasn't going to do anything for a while and just read all the books she wanted to read, et cetera, et cetera. She was reading about a book a day. So, then by winter quarter she wanted to go back to law school, so she went back to law school at Ohio State, got a law degree there. And it was an interesting time, because the discrimination against women was pretty overt. So, she would go for job interviews and people would say "so"—she really liked commercial law, so she'd be talking to businesses and they'd say "oh, so what does your husband do?" "Oh, he's an assistant professor at Ohio State." "So, he may not get tenure. Are you going to have kids? You might have kids, right?" She was one of, I think, six women in the law school there at the time, so she really had no prospects in the business sector of getting a job. And law firms, they pulled the same deal.

She ended up joining the Finance faculty at Ohio State, teaching business law, and she proceeded to do that for four or five years. Then she decided she wanted to go into private practice. Then she decided, after about two years of that, that the supermom stuff was a bad deal, when the third kid came along, and then she stopped working until Michael was about eight or nine, and then she went back to Ohio State as an advisor in Arts and Sciences, later became assistant dean of advising in Arts and Sciences, and then we came out here.

CP: Well, we're up against our time limit for the day. The last thing I want to ask you about is running.

ER: Well you know, I've always loved sports, so growing up, I mean probably the thing I played most for the most years was basketball until I—and it's really true—they stopped calling me. So, when I was approaching fifty I saw—I think when I was fifty, I saw one of these guys that we would play like one night a week, a bunch of us with this pick-up game, and I said "well"—because they would always call you at the beginning of the year, whether we had a gym secured to play, so I saw him in the spring, I said "well, it's too bad we didn't get to play this year," he said "oh, we got to play." So, I realized whoever is making the decisions decided they didn't need to call me this time around.

So, at age fifty or whatever, my basketball career was finally hung up. And I did that a lot through school. I played baseball, I played basketball, softball, racquetball, I played tennis for many years, and what was interesting, in retrospect, was if I played tennis against somebody, I would be the one who would make the impossible shots, and I would always lose, of course, because they knew what the hell they were doing, considering—but I didn't care because I loved the exertion and I loved the running. And so I finally, and I had started running in the Frank Shorter days, back in the seventies, just to make sure I had regular exercise. Then I realized, you know, what I really like about sports is running.

And then I got dragged into central administration and Dick Sisson came from UCLA as provost, and he was in his fifties I guess. Anyway, he got this idea of running a marathon; did I want to run a marathon? So, we got this Galloway thing about training program for running, the problem being that it was a sixteen week program and we only had thirteen weeks to get ready. So, I rejiggered the schedule so we could both train, and that was in fall of '94. And so, that's at age fifty, that's when I did my first marathon, he did the marathon. And then of course you get caught up in it, and so like wow, you know, anybody can do anything once, could you do it a second time? So, of course the next year I'm back doing it the second time, and then nine years later I've done nine marathons.

[1:15:48]

And then when we came out here the first year, we were just settling in 2003, but then I did them again in 2004, 2005, 2007, 2008, so thirteen all told, and the Portland Marathon, and then I told Beth at the end of the last one, I said "you know, the only thing I can think to ask myself is what was the point of that? And the answer was 'I don't know,'" so I said "I think I'm done." So, that was that. So, I like to go out and jog or walk. You know, the older you get the more it turns into a walk, less of a run, and I used to tell people anyway that I didn't so much run; it was kind of like a thump. I'm not a runner, I'm a thumper, thump thump thump thump. I was never fast at distances. As a kid I was very fast, but it was sprinting type things, not a long—you try to maintain a pace for twenty-six miles. It's hard, unless you're built for it, which I clearly am not, it's very hard to do. So, I was a survivor more than I was a runner. But I always loved it. I mean, I love just being out there just running around.

CP: Alright, well that's a good place to stop for today. We'll finish up with Ohio State next time and then move on to our OSU.

ER: Okay.

CP: Thank you.

ER: Sure.

[1:17:12]