

Molly Graham: [00:03] This begins an oral history interview with Scott Gudes for the NOAA Heritage Oral History Project on April 11, 2023. The interviewer is Molly Graham. It's a remote interview with Mr. Gudes in Alexandria, Virginia, and I'm in Scarborough, Maine. I would like to start at the beginning if you could just say when and where you were born.

Scott Gudes: [00:24] I was born in Los Angeles, the Hollywood part, Temple Hospital on the Hollywood Freeway. 1956 August 16th.

MG: [00:39] I'm curious about your family history. Maybe you could start with your mother's side and just tell me what you know, as far back as possible.

SG: [00:46] Yeah. So, it was in what I wrote you, but my mother and father were both first-generation, born in Brooklyn, New York, around late 1928, just in time for the Great Depression. Their parents came from Europe; they were European Jews. My mother's father was from Lodz, Poland. Her mother was from Warsaw, Poland, both part of the Russian Empire at that time. On my father's side, it's a little less clear. Apparently, his father was from Ukraine, his mother from Romania, Bessarabia, now Moldova. In the case of my mother's family, it's really quite fascinating. They both, at a young age, like thirteen or so, emigrated – her father – to Antwerp, Belgium, to get work with his sister. In the case of my mother's mother, she went to Paris to live with her sister. That all coincided with the German invasion that started World War I. In my mother's father's case, they ran across the border to Rotterdam because Holland, until World War II, was always neutral. My grandfather got put on a boat, was welcomed in England as a Belgian war refugee – which is kind of funny in a way – and he went to work in London during the war in the garment industry. My mother's mother – I guess things got rough in Paris during the war, and she emigrated to England, and they met sometime after the war or during the war – I think it was after the war – and got married. Then, my mother's father came to the United States; I think really economic reasons to find work. The immigration laws were changed at that time, and my grandmother wasn't able to join him in the US for quite some time. So my uncle, my mother's older brother, was born in England, actually, and lived in England until he was six years old or so. They settled in Brooklyn, in the Brownsville area. It was a poor section of New York. My mother's family worked in garments, became furriers eventually, did okay, and then, in the Depression, they lost everything and had to rebuild.

On my father's side, they were poor, and they were pushing a cart in the streets. My father grew up more as a street thug in New York. He was thrown out of high school. My mother was quite bright. Unfortunately, her father wouldn't let her accept the scholarship to go to college. I guess it's good for me because my parents met, got married in violation of their parents' druthers, and moved to California. I came along. My sister came along first. So, poor Eastern European stock, so to speak.

MG: [03:56] Did they leave family behind in Poland?

SG: [04:00] Yeah, that's the reason why I really – I think if I went to Ancestry, i probably would not get far because the Nazis killed everybody and my grandparents' families who were still in Europe. So, there's nobody left there. There were some other relatives that emigrated to England; one went to South Africa. But I'm not aware of anyone left in Eastern Europe.

MG: [04:30] Of your grandparents' generation, just your grandparents emigrated to the United States, not their siblings or other relatives?

SG: [04:41] I have some distant relatives, so maybe one or two brothers or sisters might have emigrated. But for the most part, no. It's sort of like if you ever watch *Finding Your Roots* with Dr. [Henry] Louis Gates, and sometimes when they find somebody who has the same sort of background I do, it gets kind of grim what happened under the Nazis. It's a similar story. Not that many people – the people who came over survived, and the people who stayed in Europe did not.

MG: [05:13] Tell me again what your father's parents did for work.

SG: [05:18] I don't think his mother worked. His father was kind of a peddler. I think he sold fruits, vegetables. I don't know what other jobs, but they were pretty poor within the poor immigrant class. My mother was more middle-class poor. My father's side apparently was very poor. That's what I've been told.

MG: [05:48] Do you know how your parents met?

SG: [05:52] Not exactly. I think they met when they were sixteen. I think they wanted to get married by the time they were eighteen, and my father's father objected to it. So, they didn't get married until they were twenty-one.

MG: [06:06] Why would your father's father have objected to it?

SG: [06:10] Well, I don't know for sure. But I don't think he thought that my mother was as well off as she should be, I guess. I can't say I know for sure. The little bit I know about my parents' background, it probably should have been the other way around because my father apparently had a bad reputation, got kicked out of one high school, and was sort of a street hustler type. When they moved to California, he was selling vacuums and then sold furniture, then invested in real estate. Nobody in my family went to college until my sister did before me. Education is always a big thing in immigrant communities partly because of that. If you were denied the

ability to go to school when you know you're in Europe, there was sort of a real ingrained focus on that.

MG: [07:11] What precipitated the move to California?

SG: [07:15] My dad had pretty bad asthma. He was told if he moved someplace warmer, he would do better. They looked at Florida, they looked at Texas, and they looked at California. I guess Southern California was booming, big time, in the late '40s, early '50s. That's about what I know about it.

MG: [07:38] Were your parents involved in the Jewish community, or were they politically active at all?

SG: [07:44] Yes. My mother. My father never really cared about politics. But yeah, my mother was very, very politically active when she was younger. Now she's ninety-four, and her short-term memory is going quick. She's living back in Southern California. But she still remembers – if you talk to her about the 1960 election, JFK, or if you talk to her about Bobby Kennedy, she's got it. She was very politically aware. My father, not at all. And then religiously, yeah, I was sort of – it was required to do the – I had to get bar mitzvahed, for example. I had to go to Hebrew school.

MG: [08:49] And how did you take to that?

SG: [08:51] I didn't care for it too much. [laughter] As a kid, it was every Monday and Wednesday after school or Tuesday, Thursday, and Saturday. It was sort of like, why?

MG: [09:05] Were you affiliated with a synagogue in Los Angeles?

SG: [09:09] Yeah, Anaheim. Not long after I came around, my parents moved to Orange County, which is better known now, I guess, than it would have been at that time. They moved to a little house in Buena Park.

MG: [09:27] Do you know how your parents' lives changed once they moved to California?

SG: [09:34] A little bit. I mean, listening to them, they still didn't have much, but it was sort of like they were in – they missed a lot of things about New York, but they liked a lot of things about Southern California. I love Southern California. I grew up there. But in the early '50s, it was a lot less crowded. Probably was smoggy – worse smog than now. But I think that probably it seemed a bit like paradise with the beaches and the weather. They had a lot of opportunity, economic opportunity. My dad ended up going from nothing basically to becoming a successful

salesman with his own store to investing in apartment buildings in the late '50 when you could do that with very little money down. Not the greatest apartments, but by the '70s, they started selling the buildings, and they did quite well. So to go from where they went through to where they ended up, wow. Cal State Fullerton once gave an award to me in about 2008 – I guess it was – after I left government. I had my mother there at the award dinner. I said to go from what they went through to where they ended up, I would have to become President of the United States or something to make that much of a transition. So, yeah, I'm pretty grateful for that. I'm grateful to my mother, and I said so there because she always focused on government, history, and things that I got a penchant for that I never lost. She's great. At ninety-four, she can still watch Jeopardy, and if the right categories come up, she knows all the answers. She does trivia at her assisted living facility, and she wants to shout out all the answers. She does shout out all the answers, which all of her resident colleagues do not appreciate.

MG: [11:50] Well, tell me a little bit about your earliest memories growing up and the places you lived.

SG: [11:56] Buena Park is where Knott's Berry Farm is. It was that new suburb, replacing farms. It's kind of the beginning of the Orange County suburban sprawl, just like in New York with Plainview – the same sort of thing. In the 1950s, there was this huge expansion of houses that were like fifteen thousand dollars or so apiece. We moved there. You've sort of had a block mentality and knew all the neighbors. I remember that. I remember things like tumbleweeds, oddly enough, when there was a windy storm. But back then, there were enough open fields that there were lots of tumbleweeds. I remember John F. Kennedy's assassination and the teacher calling us in. At about the age of eight to nine, my parents moved to Fullerton, to a much more upscale, middle-class neighborhood, maybe upper-middle-class neighborhood in a place called Sunny Hills. Don't laugh. It's still the name of it. So, my parents bought a house that was above their means, and I moved to a neighborhood with kids who came from more money, and they weren't as friendly. That was a transition, but I got used to it. I grew up the rest of my life in Fullerton. I went away to college when I was seventeen. I went away early to San Diego State. I spent a year in the UK at the University of Liverpool. But I did my master's degree back in my hometown – Cal State University, Fullerton.

MG: [13:41] You mentioned Knott's Berry Farm. This part of California seems like an idyllic place to grow up, with lots of fun things to do and see. But it sounds like you had a mixed experience.

SG: [13:52] Sure. [laughter] I love Southern California, still do. It's probably part of my love for the ocean. From Buena Park to the ocean was probably about fifteen – I don't know – seventeen miles straight down Beach Boulevard to Huntington Beach. Later on, everybody went to Newport Beach from my high school, and that was probably twenty-something miles. I worked

as an intern when I was doing my master's. I worked for Costa Mesa, California, and that's a city that's on bluff above Newport Beach. I grew up going to the beach or lying on the beach, whatever you want to call that – walking on the beach – or fishing, going out on the ocean a lot. It was ingrained in me at a very early age. I think, in Southern California, I've always thought – it's kind of interesting because even as the population has expanded so much – I mean, it's huge, and when you fly in there, you can see the coast. The beaches are almost all public, and it goes for miles and miles and miles, and you have the mountains that are really not that far away; within an hour and a half, two-hour drive, you can be up in snow, and they're like ten thousand feet high. So, in a year like this year, they get fairly substantial snowpack, and they have ski resorts. Then you have the desert and the Colorado River. I think you find that a lot of people gravitate to one of those environments as their favorite. I liked the mountains. I liked the desert less. But I always just really loved the ocean. I love being on the ocean. My dad took me fishing on a pier when I was five. He took me out on a charter boat, probably when I was seven or eight – a charter fishing boat. And we owned a boat. We had some little fifteen-foot boats, and I just developed an affinity and love for being on the water. It's true today. I own a little boat down in Florida. I have a friend with a boat here on the Chesapeake Bay. When I get out on the water, there's just some sort of something that happens. It makes me feel happy and calm. So that started at a very young age.

MG: [16:32] Do you think you could live anywhere where there wasn't water nearby?

SG: [16:37] Washington, DC, is a ways away because the Chesapeake Bay simulates the ocean, right? But if you go to the ocean, you got to drive three hours. Chesapeake Bay's within forty-five minutes, an hour away. But no, I've always thought I'd have to be on a lake or river or something like that if I ever moved, which I never did [inaudible] the United States.

MG: [17:04] Your sister is four years older. What was your dynamic with her growing up?

SG: [17:09] Probably competitive, to some extent. But it's like everything else. When I became a freshman in our high school, she had just graduated from our high school. So, except for elementary school, we were never in the same place. But yeah, she is my only sibling. She was big in English, literature writing, that kind of thing. I don't know what else to say. She now lives in San Juan Capistrano, which is, again, one of the South Orange County cities.

MG: [17:55] I want to ask about the impact of the events of the 1960s and what you saw, especially where you were. There were the Watts riots during this time and lots of political and social changes.

SG: [18:11] Well, I was always politically pretty well informed for a kid. I do remember the Watts riots. I remember watching it on TV. How old would I have been? Was that '65?

MG: [18:37] I'd have to look it up real quick.

SG: [18:38] Yeah, so would I. I was pretty young. I was very fortunate in that my parents were very supportive of the Civil Rights Movement and very down on prejudice. I was brought up that way. As far as [being] politically aware, I remember my mother brought me to a campaign rally for John Kennedy at the Buena Park City Hall when I must have been four years old, I guess. Probably one of my original memories was being held up – and I think it was probably Teddy Kennedy [who] came. I know it wasn't John Kennedy. It could have been Bobby. They just drove in a car, but I remember being held up and seeing that, so that was a pretty young memory for a political memory. I know I was very focused. I remember when Lyndon Johnson ran. That would have been '64. I was very aware of that. I remember my third-grade teacher told me she was a [Barry] Goldwater supporter, which surprised me at the time. I remember that. Because at home, my mother was not a Goldwater fan. Then, '68 election, I remember being very focused. I was a very big supporter, in sixth grade – I guess it was – of Bobby Kennedy. I remember that he on the California primary. My parents woke me up to tell me what happened that the next morning he was assassinated. So, yeah, I was pretty aware. Now, in Orange County, though, those were all pretty out-of-step viewpoints. Orange County was the bastion of Republican conservatism at that time. The Democrats were probably the third-ranking party. It was probably Republicans, then Independents. So my mother's views were not – I didn't know it at the time, but they weren't mainstream.

MG: [20:58] Yeah, I wondered about where she was finding similarly-minded groups and people to connect with.

SG: [21:05] Well, there definitely was a vigorous Democratic Party in Orange County; it just wasn't the majority party. All my original exposure to government and politics was all through my mother. And that was, of course, like any other lens. I'm sure that's probably true for a lot of kids. I didn't become as aware of it until I got older.

MG: [21:38] Tell me a little bit about your high school experience and what stands out to you about that time.

SG: [21:43] If you ever watched the movie *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* – if you've ever seen that, it's now about forty years old or so, forty-something. That was like having my high school on screen. In Southern California, the high schools are all outdoors. You line up for physical education outside, including at the swimming pool. You're out there in your swimsuit in January. I worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken like Judge Reinhold in the movie worked at his burger place. We had guys just like Spicoli – Sean Penn. We had people in groups. We had stoners who used to go out and smoke at lunch in the school parking lot out in the vans. There

was a lot about that movie that actually, while it was funny and enjoyable to watch, was very much what I remember. We used to wear Hawaiian shirts and shorts to go to school, long hair back then. What do I remember? Some of the teachers were excellent. Actually, this sounds really bad; I'm the head of the group that's trying to put together our fiftieth reunion, which is next year. So it shows you how long ago I'm talking about. To me, of course, I look back on all that, and yeah, it was like your practice run for life in terms of socialization, obligations, and women. But everything, your friendships, the whole bit, being bullied or whatever. Sure. Junior high school and high school in that part of California – seventh and eighth grade. High school is ninth to twelfth grade. And the thing that probably I remember was always thinking, “Okay, I have to go to college.” But my parents didn't know there was any difference between any type of college, and I didn't either. I thought Cal State Fullerton was as good as Harvard. It was only long after that, [when] I was in college, that I found out that there actually was a ranking difference. But in any case, I have fairly fond memories of all that. It really was like the movie. I'm not kidding. *Fast Times at Ridgemont High* really was seeing my high school on TV. When Cameron Crowe did the work to put together the movie, he went into a high school in San Diego, which is about a hundred miles South of where I grew up. That's probably why it seems so similar because that was what he tried to get the experience of high school again.

MG: [25:00] Yeah, I'll have to rewatch that.

SG: [25:03] Yeah, if you do, you'd see what I'm talking about. The characters in it were classic.

MG: [25:09] Were you gravitating to certain subjects or areas and figuring out what you were interested in and wanted to pursue in college?

SG: [25:17] Yeah, yeah. I wasn't a really great student in high school. I was more like a B student. I didn't try very hard, I guess. I gravitated to those same things that, I guess – it's a question of do you like what you're good at, or are you good at what you like? I don't know which is true. But I liked history a lot. I was great at it. I liked geography a lot. I was great at it. I was interested in politics and government, which they didn't really present very much. I did okay in English. I didn't do so good at math, which sort of meant that I wasn't going to become some of the careers that – I would have never worked at NOAA [inaudible]. Based on my science and math, I would never have made it. I might have made it to NOAA, but I wouldn't have made it high-ranking. Let's put it that way. What I learned at a pretty young age about all that is if you have an appreciation for those things, like oceanography or meteorology, even if you don't know how to do the model if you know what the model means or why the computer's important if you get to a certain level, you can be really good at that. But if somebody turned around and said to you, “Go build a supercomputer to get a better data assimilation on our latest hurricane model,” forget it. Same thing with satellites. This is jumping ahead, but when I was at OMB [Office of Management and Budget], and I got assigned NOAA, at that time, NOAA

wasn't that old. It's like, "What does that entail?" He said, "Weather, Fisheries, and satellites." I thought, "Oh, God. Space and satellites. That's really difficult stuff." What I learned is you may have no idea how to develop an atmospheric instrument that's going to sit at 22,000 miles above Earth and give me these profiles of humidity and temperature. Not in a million years. But you might be better at marketing and explaining what that instrument and that upgrade means when speaking to Congress, to OMB, or to the public. That's something where I kind of developed a niche to be a really good advocate for NOAA. Whereas if I were to come up through the ranks at NOAA, I would have never made it.

MG: [27:44] Yeah, I agree. I watched a number of talks you gave, and you were great at conveying the value of these instruments and the impact they have on the public.

SG: [27:53] Well, I kind of gravitate to that. Yeah.

MG: [27:57] How were you spending weekends and summers during high school? Did you have a part-time job?

SG: [28:03] Yeah, all the above. I worked at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I worked at a few other restaurants until the soap destroyed my skin. I was a dishwasher and a breader. My best buddy got me the job at Kentucky Fried Chicken. I worked for \$1.35 an hour. As I said, it was like the movie. And I probably worked five days a week or something like that. But summers were kind of neat. A, you're not in school, and B, you go to the beach, and the weather's perfect. One summer, my dad had me go to Arizona – I think that was the summer of '73 when I was a junior – to learn how to sell cars, to learn how to be a salesman. That was one of the worst experiences of my life. I did not last long. But anyway, summers in Southern California are idyllic, really. There's no humidity there – or wasn't. It's probably true across the country. If you ask a kid about their summers, it's pretty great.

MG: [29:21] Did you apply to any other colleges besides San Diego State University? How were you thinking about your next steps after graduation?

SG: [29:28] I started getting more serious about college. I started realizing that my grades weren't – they were like a three-point – I don't know what it would be nowadays, but a B-plus average or a B average or something like that. I took the SAT and the ACT tests. It was foreordained that I had no choice; I would go to college because of everything I said before. My parents were like, "You'll go to Cal-State Fullerton," which was the university in our hometown. As I said, I didn't know much difference between – I had something from American University in the mail that looked really neat, and it was from Washington, DC. I showed it to my parents, and they were like, "No, we're not paying for any of that." I applied to San Diego State number one, I think San Francisco State number two, and Cal State Fullerton number three. I don't



know why I didn't try to go to the University of California; they're more expensive, and, as I said, I didn't really understand at that time that they were better academically. I found out that you don't actually need your last semester in high school, at least my high school, to graduate. So, I started thinking, hey, maybe I would go to San Diego State early because somebody else in my class was doing that at another university. I had, on my own, studied for these advanced placement exams in American history, European history. So, I left. I graduated in December of my senior year and went to San Diego State. What was really bizarre was the reason I ended up coming to Washington when I was twenty-one with a master's degree was because, at seventeen, when I went away to San Diego State, I had these twelve-semester credits in addition to my first semester, and then I found out – some guy at the dorm told me about these credit by examination CLEP [College Level Examination Program] exams. If you did within a certain percentile, they would waive those requirements and give you the credits. So when I went back to graduate from – this is really kind of funny. But when I went back to graduate from high school in June, six months later, I was almost a junior in college, but only fifteen of those semester credits were graded. So, it was very bizarre. I kind of zoomed forward. The next year, I went a full year to San Diego State. And then, the next year, I went to Liverpool, the University of Liverpool as part of the international program. I was nineteen. And there, all I did was study history, which made it pretty easy, really. They made it sound like the British Universities were so difficult, but it wasn't from my perspective. The international program at the state universities in California, they were like, “Hey, the British system is really hard, and we only send the best students, and you got to have a high GPA.” But I found that it was a great experience, but it wasn't that difficult because – I would go to tutorials and classes, but it was all history. I think I had one class that wasn't history. The one thing British students get to do that's easier than American students is that by the time they go to university, they're not having to do basic requirements. They're doing the field of study/subject they want to do or got qualified to do. That's true for doctors, by the way. They start out as undergraduates in medical school. But anyway, it was a great experience.

MG: [34:00] Did you finish your degree in Liverpool?

SG: [34:04] No, I came back. They took that one year and equated it to grades back in California. I did one more semester at San Diego State. I worked for one of the city councilmen for my internship in government politics at the city council.

MG: [34:29] Which city was that?

SG: [34:30] San Diego. The city of San Diego. My great contribution to things was watching the phones while they went to lunch. It was a volunteer job, but it was something on a resume.

MG: [34:46] Backing up a little bit, just tell me about your time at San Diego State University, the classes you were taking, and the professors you were learning from.

SG: [34:55] There's a number that stand out. There was one guy, this geography professor, who's still in the area down there, Ernest Griffin. He was phenomenal. [He] did South American geography. Actually, the only reason I got to go to Liverpool was when I applied to the international program, I was eighteen, and it turned out he was on the panel, to my surprise. About a month later, I got a letter saying, "Sorry you didn't make it." Then, when I just happened to mention it, he said, "Well, that's not right. You were our top-ranked student." So, it turned out, the people in Sacramento at the chancellor's office thought I was too young to send overseas. So, he took the lead, and they fixed that. That's how I ended up going to the United Kingdom. He was phenomenal.

Again, this was a long time ago. We were studying history. You would say that period of time is now history. I studied American foreign policy, history of American foreign policy, political geography – again, these are not NOAA things. Yeah, I had some really good professors. I had this one guy – I guess Como was his last name. He was Italian-American and an immigrant. He was captured in the Italian Army in North Africa, and he taught political geography. It's a very fascinating issue. It's how borders are categorized and how history and events end up affecting geography. You just don't tend to think of it that way. He was something. He was very opinionated and exposed me to a lot of stuff in the Middle East. He had very strong views. Your professors have a big impact on your thought process. I suppose it's like what I said about high school, except in high school, I was much more focused on my social life. And in college, I was obsessed with getting A's because it was going to matter for going to law school.

MG: [37:47] Was that a potential plan for you?

SG: [37:49] Yeah. It was, again, my mother's influence. "You should be a lawyer." I never was, by the way. When I worked on the Hill, everybody always assumed because I was writing laws that, I was a lawyer. I'm like, "No." I wasn't. I met a lot of lawyers that didn't like being lawyers. they did not want to actually practice law.

MG: [38:14] It's interesting how you've ended up in positions where other people got the degree to qualify to do.

SG: [38:22] You're right. I got lucky. Your career is a lot of things, right? But one of the things is just plain luck. I used to say this when I talked to young people. I used to say two things. One is there's a lot of people who develop their career plans by the book, "what color is your parachute," and getting yourself to do X, Y, and Z. I always believe in the "trout method" instead. Up there in Maine, if you're by a cold brook, trout hang out behind rocks, and they just

maintain conservation, and they check what's coming down the river, stream, or the brook or whatever. And every now and then, they come up to the surface and then they'll snap at something they really think is pretty good. Other times, they just watch and let the potential meal float by. My career was more like that. It's like, stuff comes along, and people would say, "How would you like to do this?" I ended up at OMB because I had people in my beach house from OMB who thought I'd be good. I really wasn't interested in it. But when I got to OMB, I got assigned the NOAA account, and I thought, "Well, this is great. I love this stuff." although I was working for the Reagan administration, who did not love this stuff. And then later on, I ended up at the Senate because I knew somebody who also had been a Presidential Management Intern [PMI]. And one day, they said, "How'd you like to come to the committee?" And they offered me – they had me go talk to Senator Ted Stevens, who offered me a position. I ended up in the United States Senate. Well, what I say to people is those sorts of things came along, and I decided, "Yeah, I'd go for that." I put myself in a position where I had the right background. And then the other thing is, unfortunately, I guess, or fortunately, depending on who you are, Washington, DC, is very much a little town. It really is who you know. It really is. I think it still is. The Hill is definitely that way. The Hill has no merit-based hiring at all. It is totally, "Do you know a good name? So, one, professionally, I put myself in a position where I'd check out what was going on, and stuff would come my way without necessarily chasing it. Not everything I did, but a lot. Then secondly, who I knew through my career made a big difference definitely. What they call "networking."

MG: [40:54] Well, tell me a little bit about what campus life was like for you. It sounds like you were studying a lot and focused on schoolwork.

SG: [41:01] At San Diego State?

MG: [41:03] Yeah.

SG: [41:04] I was working on being the opposite of what I was in high school. I was studious. I was overkill in terms of studying. I had a social life, and I took sailing lessons at the campus sailing center down in Mission Bay, but I really changed when I left high school and became much more obsessed with getting good grades. I ended up having a master's by the time I was twenty-one, and I became a Presidential Management Intern. I got straight A's and all that. But I also gave up a lot of taking classes I shouldn't take because I was afraid of getting a bad grade, which would mess up my GPA [grade point average]. Secondly, I should have done a lot more enjoying things than I did. But that's easy for me to say because things worked out.

MG: [42:13] Talk to me a little bit about the decision to go into your master's so quickly.

SG: [42:19] Well, I thought I was supposed to go to law school, as I said. My mother thought – I was a little bit afraid of doing that. I did take the LSATs [Law School Admission Test]. I did apply to law schools. A friend of mine in England convinced me I should get an MBA, Master of Business. That ended up being kind of a false start on my part. So, at the age of twenty, I was trying to figure out what I was going to do “now that I was a grown-up,” and everybody was assuming I was going to go to work, and I wasn't so keen on that. [laughter] Anyway, I found out there was a Master's in Public Administration program at the university in my hometown of Fullerton. I ended up gravitating to that, and it ended up being great. I learned there were all sorts of government careers you could do without being a lawyer. But I applied to law school, and I had the choice – it was similar in that I studied hard. I went to the city of Costa Mesa city manager's office every day and worked in the daytime as an intern for three dollars and twenty-five cents an hour. The paid internship was twenty hours a week. I put in extra time – I was basically working full-time because I was really doing what I wanted to do, learning all things about running a city. They let me work on the budget. I'd go on ride-alongs with police, firemen, the whole bit. Around December, the head of my master's program, a guy by the name of Alan Saltzstein, said, “Hey, there's this new program called Presidential Management Intern.” Now, it's called Presidential Management Fellows because they decided they didn't like the intern name for a few reasons. “And we'll nominate you if you want.” At that time, I was applying to the California State Senate, State House, other things. I was looking at different cities, counties. I said, “Okay,” and I didn't take it very seriously. I hand-wrote the application. We used to have these little portable typewriters because we didn't have laptop computers yet. He said, “Well, you really should type it, so I typed the thing. Then I went to the interviews, and I really didn't view it as a real opportunity. I went to the interviews in Los Angeles. This would have been about early February of 1978, I guess, and at the interviews – this says something about me and my background, I guess – there were a bunch of people from the University of Southern California, which is a private university in Los Angeles. They had nominated like fifty-something people! They had put them through videotaped interviews and rehearsed them on what to say. They were very dismissive of people coming from Cal State University, Fullerton. So, that got me kind of motivated. Anyway, I did the interviews. I remember a guy from UCLA [University of California, Los Angeles] was with me in an assessment center, what they called it at the time, where they have you work with six other candidates on issues. They give you an issue, and they would say, “You got to do a reduction in force,” but you're told you can't compromise on the following goals. “How are you going to do that?” *Boom*. You got twenty minutes. Then they have all these federal officials sitting around watching and taking notes. When we got done, this guy from UCLA said, “Man, that was really good what you said, but I wouldn't have said that if I were you.” I came out of there – I thought, “Well, that was that.” Then I got surprised; around March or April, suddenly, my phone started ringing, and it was agencies calling me offering me positions before I found out I got accepted. In the end of that year, in late May, I got my master's. In June, I packed up my car, and I drove to

Washington, DC, to start at the Office of the Secretary of Defense [OSD] in the Pentagon. That's how I ended up in Washington, not thinking I'd be there for more than two years.

MG: [46:45] Were you placed with Defense?

SG: [46:49] No. The program's evolved over time, and it's not just public administration/public policy people nowadays, but it was back then. It was set up by Scotty Campbell, who was the head of the Office of Personnel Management – Civil Service Commission [which] became the Office of Personnel Management. He was a big champion of civil service reform. This is President Carter's time. Campbell was the head of the public administration school at the University of Texas, the LBJ School, and he came up with this idea and sold it to President-candidate Carter. The idea was to bring in bright, talented young people to get around the way that the civil service and veterans preference and everything would freeze people out. The idea was to get people on a fast track. You'd come in as a GS-9. After a year, you were a GS-11. After a year, you were a GS-12. By the time I was twenty-three, I was a GS-12. I went from making \$3.25 an hour to real money; twenty-something-thousand dollars a year was huge! So, that's what the program was. To answer your question, the way they did it at the beginning, the agencies went to OPM and looked through the resumes. There were 250 job federally-wide. The limit was 250 back then. They would decide who they wanted to interview. Back then, they said, "You'll be referred to three agencies." I got called from NASA [National Aeronautics and Space Administration] Johnson Space Center before I even knew I was a PMI finalist. Then, I got called by the Office of the Secretary of Defense. They said they would fly me from Fullerton, my hometown, to Los Angeles International, which is, by the way, about forty miles away. I would fly on a helicopter, then get a commercial flight, come back to Washington, and they're going to take me out to dinner with these other finalists and interview us in the Pentagon. And then, while I was getting ready to do that, the Justice Department called me up; it was the Office of the Assistant Attorney General for Administration. It was very heady stuff. It actually was cherry blossom time in Washington, DC. I probably gravitated to the Justice position and interviewed at about five bureaus at the Department of Justice, plus the Assistant Attorney General for Administration.

Then, the same thing happened at the Office of the Secretary of Defense. The other finalists were from more prestigious schools, Johns Hopkins, Princeton. There was a bit of – I don't know what you call it – the elite sort of thing, and that got me more competitive. To my surprise, the Office of the Secretary of Defense called me back and wanted me to work there. I was wanting to hear back – and they did it the next day – and I was waiting to hear from the Justice Department. I remember my mother's influence again; she was like, "You can't turn this down. You got to go back and give them an answer." That's how I ended up in the Office of the Secretary of Defense, which is a big organization with thousands of employees, by the way. It's not like you're sitting next to the Secretary of Defense. That was an amazing experience. They

put me in an office called Program Analysis and Evaluation, European Division, and it was all about NATO/Warsaw Pact. It was about everybody else's military or foreign military. I was working in an office in the Pentagon without any windows. And it was all Soviet Union-like preparing to defend Norway from a Soviet attack. What do we got to do as NATO to prepare? And some of that now is much more back in reality with Russia's invasion of Ukraine. Whereas for a long time here, thirty years ago or more, people were – "Yeah, that's interesting." That wasn't what I wanted to do, and I was qualified for the job, but there I was.

MG: [50:56] I have a number of follow-up questions. But while we're on the subject, were you involved in or aware at all of the Soviet Jewry movement during this time?

SG: [51:06] I was. Yeah, I was, both because I was aware of marches and things in the United States, especially, I think, during the Nixon Administration, there was a lot of that. And then, when I was in England, I went on a tour of the Soviet Union for one week. It was amazingly cheap, just like my university education. I probably didn't tell you that my university education was basically free. I didn't have any of the issues students do nowadays because registration was like a hundred dollars, or a hundred and fifty dollars a semester. And the University of Liverpool said, "We'll just comp you for whatever you pay back home." And my master's degree wasn't much more expensive. When I was in England, I decided at the spring vacation – I saw this Thompson Tour for the Soviet Union for like three hundred dollars [including] airfare. It was ridiculous. It included airfare on Aeroflot. It included a train between Moscow and Leningrad. It included meals and tours. Me and another student from the University of Liverpool went on the trip. It's a long answer to your question, but when we were in Leningrad, which is now St. Petersburg again, there was an American couple from Sheffield University who went to a synagogue, and they met some Soviets Jews there, Russians who talked about how bad things are. The couple came back. The Jewish people had asked for any sort of periodicals, magazines, newspapers, anything they had. So, I volunteered to go back the next evening. I went looking for this guy named Joseph. The only thing they told me was he was young compared to everybody else, and his name was Joseph. I never did find Joseph. Or when I did find him, he didn't give me his name as Joseph. But I ended up meeting this fellow. Everybody else was really old, and they were praying in a traditional way if you know what I mean, Orthodox Jewry davening. I had tea and coffee with him afterward and with Vera, the woman who was the other Liverpool student. I brought him these *Time Magazine*, but he didn't really want them. He said, "I'll get in trouble." So maybe he wasn't the Joseph person. But we talked a lot. He said that in the beginning of his passport, it said, "Jew." He talked about how bad things were. And I said to him, "What can we do?" And he said, "You can't really do anything, but [Henry] Kissinger can do something." I remember that vividly. It was very eye-opening and very depressing, actually.

MG: [54:04] It's an interesting subject and part of history.

SG: [54:11] Well, a lot of those people did immigrate. I wondered yesterday when I was reading about the *Wall Street Journal* reporter who's been now imprisoned by the Russians. How much of it's because he has a Jewish background and his parents lived in Russia?

MG: [54:36] I know we have to wrap up soon. About how many more minutes do you have?

SG: [54:40] I think I've got until my wife yells at me.

MG: [54:44] [laughter] Okay. Backing up a little bit, can you say a little bit more about the work you were doing in San Diego's city council? Was that when you were an undergrad?

SG: [54:52] Yeah. It really wasn't very meaningful. What happened was there was a political internship class my last semester, and everybody else went to work for political campaigns. I don't know why, but for some reason, I thought, "Well, that's not really what I want to learn. I'd rather learn something about governing." So I drove down to the city council in downtown San Diego, and I went to the council office by council office saying, "I'm from San Diego State, and I'd like to do an [internship]." There was this one office that said – it was Council District number five, I think. It was Councilman Morrow. And the guy's name was Phil Schaefer, who was his Chief of Staff [and] said, "Okay, well, maybe we might be able to take you on." That's how I got that. There wasn't much substantive I ever did for them in terms of meaningful things, but I did help out, and I got to see things. I got to go to some community meetings where the councilman was there. At the end of that, I applied for the California State Senate Fellowship, and I got to be a finalist, which was really kind of heady. They flew me to Sacramento, but unfortunately I didn't get it. Most of the other students, I think, were law students. I was really kind of crushed by that. But I think, having worked in the city council, as I said it – I tell this to young people, "Get something on your resume, and if it's not a good assignment, move on." So, I did that for the fall of 1976. At the same time, there was a presidential election going on. I sometimes will put it on a resume just because I was proud that I did work in local government there and at Costa Mesa because in Washington, DC, of course, people don't think much about local government. They don't think often of local government. In fact, here's a memorable quote for you. This is true. It says a lot, actually, about Washington, DC, and other things. When I got brought back to interview at the Pentagon at the Office of the Secretary of Defense, the night before, they took us out to dinner at the Southwest Waterfront and drove us around the lit-up monuments, which really impressed me. It was the head of the personnel office, which didn't mean anything to me at the time [inaudible] Carl Becker. I was very worried that working in Washington, DC, would hurt my goal at the time of working eventually in local government and city management. So, I asked them what they thought about that. I said, "Do you think that working for the Federal government would hurt my career?" Because my city, being in Orange County, was very anti-federal. They just talked about "the Feds" all the time. They refused to

accept grant money for years because they didn't want to deal with “the Feds.” So it gives you a sense. So, I asked the head of personnel – human resources, but back then, I think it was called personnel. I said, “Do you think this could negatively affect my career?” And he said, “Well, we're not the federal government. We are the U.S. Department of Defense.” [laughter] You know the term, the other side of the river? They don't think they're part of – they're not the Executive Branch; they're the Department of Defense. I still remember that.

MG: [58:27] In a talk you gave, you mentioned working with someone named Fred Sorsabal. Do I have that name right? You talked about looking at the El Nino rains.

SG: [58:39] Oh, Fred Sorsabel was the city manager in Costa Mesa. I actually worked directly for the assistant city manager, a guy named Bob Duggan. I worked for him directly. The year I worked at Costa Mesa happened to be an El Nino year in California. It was like this year – very rainy. The city flooded. That's probably what I was referring to. It was more normal to have – California has always had these droughts. There's a good book called *Cadillac Desert*. I'll have to remember. It's about the West and water. California has always had these ups and downs, especially Southern California, where you have an average of ten inches a year, but some years it's almost nothing. Some years, it's twenty-something inches. Sometimes it's thirty. They used to have huge floods in Orange County – people don't even know that nowadays – before they channeled all the rivers with cement. So Southern California, the whole area got a lot of rain *that* year and flooding. Costa Mesa did, too. Maybe that's what I was referring to. I think we might have had the term El Nino, but maybe not. Maybe not by then. I don't know when it came into vogue. Certainly, by the time I worked at OMB in the early '80s, we talked about El Nino a lot.

MG: [1:00:05] In that role, working for Bob Duggan, were you doing anything around emergency preparedness for El Nino?

SG: [1:00:12] Not yet. No. No, I was with – the fire department was pumping water and things like that. But no, not in terms of planning. I don't think people thought in terms of climate change. I don't even think when I was at OMB – when I was at OMB, NOAA was doing a lot of research in the Western Pacific – so was NSF [National Science Foundation] at that time – putting out different measurement devices, Pacific buoys, and new prediction models. When I read these original NOAA newsletters from the early '70s when the agency was created, it's interesting because you tend to think that things are new and different, but actually, all the same kind of things that people talk about, whether it's climate change or marine mammals or pollution or whatever, they're all there. Bob Whiet, the first NOAA Administrator, was talking about a lot of those things in 1971 – so impressive. In fact, the issue you guys have up there in Maine with the lobsters and the right whales, Bob White told me his greatest accomplishment – this is when I was talking to people who had worked at NOAA before I went to NOAA when I knew I was going there – had been selected. I remember he said his greatest accomplishment



was the moratorium on whaling at the International Whaling Commission. This is a guy who's background was as a meteorology/atmospheric guy.

MG: [1:01:47] That's very interesting. When you came to work for the government, was there a pretty extensive vetting process? Were family members interviewed?

SG: [1:01:55] For clearances, you mean?

MG: [1:01:56] Yeah.

SG: [1:01:58] Not at the beginning. In fact, early on, I had to have a secret clearance at OSD, but I never got an upgrade. Later on in my career, when I did defense appropriations in the Senate, then I had to have my clearance upgraded, and they started interviewing people who knew me. At one point, I had to go above top secret for a program I got when I had the Commerce, Justice, and State portfolio. I can't discuss what that program was. Actually, interesting – I have a story about my wife, Ann. We were dating at that time. This is now 1990 or so. We were dating, and I was going through one of these upgrades or periodic security upgrades. The FBI [Federal Bureau of Investigation] called her. This was in '91. The FBI called her. She's a nurse at Sibley Hospital. She was scared. And they said, "This is the FBI. We're doing a background investigation on Scott." So they ask these questions. They said, "Is there anything else you want to tell us?" And she said, "Yes, he doesn't like to take gifts from lobbyists." [laughter] She called me to tell me that, and I had thought that the FBI might call her. I said, "You told them I don't *like* to take gifts?" Because I used to complain, at that time, all the time about how lobbyists would leave all these things at the office. I used to complain all the time about all the aerospace lobbyists leaving – because, back then, they could; it was legal. But I remember that. I said, "You told them I don't *like* to do that. Oh, that's just great." But yes, to answer your question, as I got higher clearances, and then when I was at Lockheed Martin, I had to have really high clearances, they would call everybody who knew somebody. By the way, I used to do that for other people on the Appropriations and Budget Committee. I was one of their references [inaudible].

MG: [1:04:26] Oh, interesting.

SG: [1:04:27] It's actually kind of funny.

MG: [1:04:29] Well, it sounds like you have to go. Do you want to put a pin in it, and we can pick up here next time?

SG: [1:04:34] Is that okay?

MG: [1:04:35] It's okay with me.

SG: [1:04:36] Is that okay with you?

MG: [1:04:36] Yes. I'll send you some dates that I have available, and you can let me know what works for you.

SG: [1:04:40] Sure. That'd be great. I don't know if this is what you want me to do or if you want me to shorten it up.

MG: [1:04:46] No, no, you're doing great. This is all really interesting. I have a number of follow-up questions from what we've talked about so far, and then we can keep moving into your career next time.

SG: [1:04:54] Okay. All right. Thank you.

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