Part One

Wednesday, April 12, 2006

SG: Professor Turzanski, thank you for agreeing to do this...

ET: You’re quite welcome.

SG: ...oral history interview. As you know, this interview is part of a fieldwork for a project that will contribute to preserving the history of LaSalle. These recordings we make today will be transcribed and presented to Brother Joe Grabenstein for the University archives. Good afternoon.

ET: Good afternoon.

SG: I have the pleasure of speaking to you...hearing you speak on multiple occasions and some of those speeches you gave you mentioned your upbringing as being typical row home Philadelphia. Could you describe what that means?

ET: Sure. In my case [clears throat] and keep in mind Philadelphia’s a city of neighborhoods where your identification is very often first which neighborhood you’re from and then which parish or...well, actually it’s what your parish for the most part. I am from the Port Richmond section of Philadelphia, which is one of the...I guess there’s four sections in the city where you have large emigrations of Poles coming to the United States usually between the first and second world wars and then after the second world war. My parents were both refugees from Poland after the second world war. Met here and married and actually moved into the row house that my mother still lives in. My, my dad passed two years ago, but [clears throat] walked into the house with their new baby who’s me. So [clears throat] I went to Saint Adelburg’s Grade School and then Northeast Catholic High School and then LaSalle College.

And [pause] row house Philadelphia is exactly what the name suggests. People live in close quarters, they’re in row homes, and [pause] I’d say that we had working class backgrounds. Kids you went to school with were from working class background, and it was absolutely
extraordinary stored a car in a garage. We worked outside the home as kids and had what by today’s standards I suppose you would say were...I don’t think humble background, but certainly working class background and we thought everything was fine and we were growing up so [pause] if you go back to Port Richmond when I was growing up, there were five Catholic parishes within a five block radius, all different ethnic groups. Polish, Irish, German, Italian, Lithuanian, and a mixed marriage was a guy from Saint Al’s and a girl from Nativity. So it was...and...and...in addition to churches, the neighborhoods were characterized by corner taprooms, grocery stores, funeral parlors, and flower shops. That...those constituted the elements of local economy at the time. And then they built an Acme, or, as they call it, A-ca-me in Philadelphia. And a lot of the grocery stores closed and today my...as I said, my mother’s still lives in Port Richmond, but to me that phrase “Row home Philadelphia” connotes tightly knit communities where you know your neighbors, they know you, there’s the kind of...communal sense of right and wrong that is reinforced by other people, a neighborhood where if you’re doing something untoward, somebody will let your...your mom know, who would, who would fill Dad in when he got back home from work, and then we would have immediate administration and justice. So that’s a long-winded answer. I apologize. But that’s that’s a pretty clear shot of what row home Philadelphia meant for me.

SG: That’s quite okay. Thank you very much. My next question would be how did your upbringing in row home Philadelphia lead you to LaSalle? Was there a connection?

ET: There was because...

SG: ...Besides the Catholicism?

ET: [laughs] Well, when I was a student at North Catholic, I took Russian and Father Raymond Fleck, God love him, he’s also gone, but Father Fleck would bring us to LaSalle because Professor George Perfesky offered Russian classes here, and Father Fleck wanted to give us a taste of college life because he wanted to encourage us to go on to college and...that kind of connection put LaSalle very much in the mix and I must say, I wasn’t looking at a large number of schools, and they were a fairly lineal path for myself and a lot of kids like me because we had to pay our own way. In my case, I finished third in my class at North Catholic, but didn’t get any scholarship aid and wound up...I paid my own way through high school and paid my way through college [pause] as a meat cutter for Acme markets. I was a busboy and host and a waiter at the Riverfront Dinner Theater. That’s how I paid for high school. I got lucky and got a job in the neighborhood as a meat cutter for Acme markets and that’s how I paid my way through college. So I think it’s that programmed, that connection between North Catholic and LaSalle where I would come here and sit in on a class once a year that gave me an inspiration as to what my next step oughta be.

And also I should mention that through Father Fleck I got to experience Dr. Richard Cleary, C. Richard Cleary in the political science department who passed away in 1983 and was quite an eccentric and some people would say acquired taste. Some people were quite fond of him as I was. Others didn’t quite appreciate him the same way. But he was certainly a
personality who wanted to take kids and get them out of their circumstances and impress upon them that it was within their means to fight above their weight, which to me is an encapsulation of what it means to be from a LaSalle background. You have extraordinary reach into places where most people wouldn’t presume that they’d find someone from row home Philadelphia. You got there because you had a pretty solid foundation which was acquired along the way but certainly LaSalle was part of that.

SG: So you’re becoming undergraduate student at LaSalle and you’re working your way through it. Are you commuting or are you living on...

ET: Commuter. Absolutely. They...

SG: When LaSalle was a [pause]...

ET: It was predominantly....

SG: There was a transfer between....

ET: It was predominantly commuter at the time but certainly growing. It had not yet pursued university status but more and more kids were living on campus. And [pause] there were enough resident students that commuters felt that they were somewhat second-class citizens to the residents. I have a daughter who’s a freshman now and if anything that feeling has grown. I think it’s rather unavoidable. I think it’s just part of college life. But because I had to work, my job was either coming to school or going to work so I was a commuter.

SG: That brings me to the next question. What was it like for you as a student here at LaSalle? And you were here as an undergraduate in the late seventies and you graduated in ‘81...

ET: 1977 through May of ‘81. I made some great friends here. Somewhat [pause] oh, I suppose ironic that we’re doing this interview now because it’s my 25th reunion year and I made some very good friends that I’ve had for more than 25 years because of my time here and I’ll always be grateful for that. For me, now keep in mind I came from an all-boys school so there’s a bit of a culture shock and a bit of a distraction in that I had women in the class for the first time. I had to get over that quickly but intellectually it was very rewarding. I had an opportunity to meet people and do things that quite frankly people from my parents’ background didn’t think were possible. I actually I’ll change that. They thought were possible but required a lot of hard work and good fortune, so it was a good place to be.

SG: Could you [pause] besides the academics, which I know you excelled at...you graduated magna cum laude from LaSalle. Can you go a little further into student life, the kind of things that you did as a student? Do you recall...

ET: Yeah. I have to tell you it is the one part of college life that I did not get to experience, and
that is life outside the classroom. The only time I spent outside the classroom was in the cafeteria, waiting for classes, and that's where I'd meet my friends. But it was difficult because I was working 40 hours a week, holding down a dual major, and I finished with 3.7 cum, dual major in Russian and political science with a minor in concentrated international studies or...earned a certificate in that...concentrated international studies. So I did not have the same opportunity for participation outside the classroom. Anything I did outside the classroom really was an offshoot of what went on inside the classroom.

SG. So you studied Political Science and...

ET: Russian.

SG: ...predominantly. Those were your majors. Double major...

ET: Right.

SG: ...Both seem pretty challenging, especially the Russian. Do you find that with the, time to go on a little tangent here. Do you find that you're still able to use your Russian a lot or are you...

ET: Oh my goodness, yes! Oh sure. Here's...here's something. And I think this is a function of natural interest. The dedication and support I received from faculty members and others once I we--entered the world of work. And also just natural interest. But I came here with a strong interest in international relations and it was really a pivotal point in the Cold War and I had a strong interest in government service and it wasn't that I came here to study something that would be purely academic to me. I came here because I had an interest that was central to who I was as a person and that wasn't going to go away. So if anything it grew over time. And...yes, I've put very extensive and meaningful, practical use, the sorts of things that I studied while I was in political science classes and in my Russian classes.

SG: What were the programs like, the political science and Russian classes? As far as getting you ready for your career as an analyst on international issues?

ET: They were both quite modest in terms of the number of students. But I would say that the one distinguishing quality that made both programs very valuable and it's something that I've tried to embrace as a faculty member here is the notion of the kind of personal attention that I received from faculty. I was really fortunate to have some extraordinary teachers but more so they're extraordinary individuals. George Peresky was one of those guys...is one of those guys who is the consummate professional in terms of linguistic studies and he didn't care who you were or where you were from you had to get the declensions right. That's what it was. It is what it is. That kind of thing. Dick Cleary, a man of extraordinary background who was absolutely inspirational in how he described enduring principles in politics and also just very uplifting in the way in which he treated individual students. If you had an interest in subject matter, Dick Cleary was the kind of
guy that made you believe not only were you special to him, but you were special period. You were on the flight path to accomplish great things. And it was just...it was so inspirational and now, looking back, it's very humbling that someone of his caliber would take an interest in a kid from row home Philadelphia. I'll mention another faculty member. And I'm very fortunate to have him as a colleague now. Joe Brogan. Who, to my thinking, is one of the most brilliant men I've ever had the privilege of learning from. Joe Brogan's survey of political thought...it's just...it was a mind-expanding experience. [Someone knocks on the door.] Yes? [Pause] Come in. Hello? Excuse me. Sorry.

SG: It's okay.

BREAK IN RECORDING

ET: And...[pause] just his Survey of Political Thought class was one of those things where I'd get together with my friends and you asked earlier what it was like in the cafeteria. We often talked about the Phillies, we talked about the Eagles and Flyers, and we'd talk about our courses. And it was the sort of thing where you'd get a bunch of kids, guys and gals, sitting around, seriously talking about what it was that we had done in Brogan's class and what was also a lot of fun with Joe Brogan is he had a great interest in film...still does...and every once in a while would engage in a pleasant diversion where he'd go off on a tangent talking about some film that illustrated the point that Plato was making. It was just the sort of thing where you really got a sense that you were engaged in a meaningful intellectual enterprise.

One of my most vivid memories. I had written a paper and Joe took me aside and quizzed me very directly about the paper. And I couldn't figure out why this was happening, but I answered all his questions and he looked at me and he said, "You didn't plagiarize this, did you? You wrote this," he said. And I...I was taken aback. I said "Of course I wrote it," and he said, "Well, this is really brilliant. I don't know...I don't know if you realize how good it is or why it's good. So I had to figure out did you just get lucky or are you this smart?" And I could have picked up Olney Hall at that point. I felt so good about myself. And to me that is the kind of thing that builds confidence and sustains you through difficulties and is also inspirational and I've always had it in mind in the contact that I have with my students to keep in mind that I have an obligation to maintain that standard a guy like Joe Brogan or Dick Cleary set for me. And also to serve the same role as someone who would discipline students, help them develop their work habits and their skills, but also inspire them with the right words at the right time.

SG: These professors obviously had a direct effect on your life and I would guess you describe at least Professors Brogan, Cleary, and Perfesky as, well, maybe especially Cleary...as a mentor. Would you...
ET: Oh, I think Dick Cleary was very much a mentor to me. And there are other great faculty. I had Brother Ed Davis for Biblical literature. It was a fantastic course. Joe Kovatch in psychology. Joe Meredith in an English composition course. Two of them in fact. Really extraordinary, extraordinary scholars and people.

SG: Would you say that’s a regular thing with professors at LaSalle, that they seem to try to reach out to students?

ET: As an institution, we’ve always prided ourselves on accessibility to students. And I’ve always had the benefit of coming here as a prospective student, being here as an enrolled student, being an alumnus, beyond the university and then coming back as a faculty member and administrator and I think that [pause] what you ask is...speaks to a fair representation for what LaSalle is as an institution, that it really is accessible to students and that there’s just a very high degree, now there may be at other places as well, and I have no doubt that there is. But here there is a very high degree of contact between faculty members and student, and you don’t get the bum’s rush. People are generally paying attention and I think that’s very representative of LaSalle.

SG: Thank you. You graduated from LaSalle in 1981 and, looking around your office here, well obviously it can’t show up on the transcript. But there are many bits of you around this office. The plaques on the wall, um...the...you’re a sports fan, you obviously are involved in politics. You have many political figures, pictures of political figures on the walls. From what I gathered in my research and looking around some of the things in my research didn’t show up. These things didn’t all show up in my research. But you worked for Representative Robert Borsky. What years did you work for him?

ET: Well, um...I came back to LaSalle under rather unique circumstances and what I was able to discuss then and what I am able to discuss now are two different things. After I left LaSalle I enrolled in the US Marine Corps and was taken straight out of boot camp and recruited into the Central Intelligence Agency. And I worked under the Director of Operations for the CIA but I was part of a unique program and was precluded from discussing anything about my job or what I did so there’s certain covers that were created for me and...you’ve just likely touched on one. I spent most of my time working on details having to do with the Middle East, Central Asia, Soviet Union, and Eastern Europe, and did congressional liaison work for a while and that’s where that Borsky reference comes up. And came back to LaSalle officially...the paperwork will show...I guess it will be late August of ‘84 but I did not make a full separation from the intelligence services until the end of the Reagan administration. So it’s just one of those odd things. And I wasn’t...my wife’s first inkling that my past was different than the resume suggested came in November of nin...of 2000. I was invited out to Texas A&M to George Bush...

SG: I’m sorry to interrupt. You were married...you had been married to your wife for...
ET: I was married... We in fact we’ve got a wedding anniversary next week. We were married on the 20th of April 1985. So at that point we were... we were five years into it, five years plus, and got this invitation to the George Bush School and it was a joint program that the Central Intelligence Agency and the George Bush School were holding to commemorate the 10th anniversary of the collapse of the Berlin Wall and it was a bit awkward because I received a couple commendations and in fact had just gotten this [points to plaque] in recognition of the commendations that I had received while in government service.

SG: So it’s a frame full of medals, about a dozen and a half medals or so, maybe two dozen medals...

ET: It’s about a dozen and...

SG: Are those Purple Hearts?

ET: Yes. I have three of them. Two on one occasion, so...

SG: And I imagine so these are some of things you can’t talk about.

ET: Right.

SG: Okay. Fair enough.

ET: That’s... it’s coincidental. This just came last week. And every once in a while there’s a reminder of my government service and in terms of [clears throat] some of the pictures you reference. There’s a photo of me taking a group of students to the CIA. Couple of years before 9/11. And took them to the national counter-terror threat assessment center. And... pictures of me with former President Bush, with my old boss Bill Casey, the CIA director, with former CIA director Richard Helms, with George Tenet, who’s the immediate past director of CIA, and...

SG: Paul Wolfowitz.

ET: Paul Wolfowitz, Colin Powell, Oleg Kalugin, who was running the Soviet spies in the Middle East when I was there. It’s kind of interesting to meet with someone who was an adversary at the time. And John Layman who’s Navy Secretary during Reagan’s administration. That’s enough from those. Zbigniew Brzezinski, who’s Jimmy Carter’s National Security Advisor.

SG: Been in the news a lot the past...

ET: Yeah.

SG: Been doing the circuit so to speak. I also see the FBI. Did you do work in the FBI?

ET: Yeah, I did work with the Foreign Counter Intelligence Bureau of the FBI, which was responsible for monitoring Soviet espionage against the United States and then acting on it and
did some extensive work with them.

SG: So how did you squeeze in a Masters at Villanova? [Laughs] During all this time you...

ET: Yeah, well...

SG: You seemed like a busy guy...

ET: Well...it wasn’t just the Masters at Villanova. I was teaching a class at LaSalle, full-time administration at LaSalle, taking my Masters at Villanova, and also [pause] teaching at Villanova at night. And, Steve, truth be told, I couldn’t do it today. I put on very long hours today, but these are the things you can do as a young man that you can’t do at the age of 46. I don’t care what kind of shape you’re in. It’s just...And I had a very understanding wife, so...

SG: What years were you in, at Villanova?

ET: Boy...’87 through ‘89.

SG: And your Masters was in...

ET: ...political science.

SG: Political science.

ET: But I’d also done, subsequently had done working with the Joint Intelligence College, Army War College, some other arrangements.

SG: And I know you’re a senior fellow at a prominent organization as well...

ET: The Foreign Policy Research Institute. They have a center for terrorism, counter terrorism, and homeland security, and I’m a senior fellow with that outfit. I also do work just with FPRI International Security Section and I serve on the Port Security Committee for the Department of Homeland Security.

SG: Wow. Maybe I can ask you questions about that later on concerning the port controversy but I’m not sure Brother Joe would need that, but I would like to know some things. So I imagine that your wife was really surprised [laughs] in 2000 when she...

ET: Yeah, this was...

SG: ...knew what you were doing...

ET. ...it was a bit awkward because I got the the sorts of questions that I guess you would get for withholding information from a marriage for five and a half years. What else aren’t you telling me? And why didn’t you tell me? You’re supposed to be able to trust me, and I am supposed to be able to trust you. And it...it made for some awkwardness. But we got past that.

SG: So you came back to LaSalle and you were wearing many hats. You were...it seems like you were still doing work with the government, you were in the administration here at LaSalle and you teaching here at LaSalle and you were taking and teaching classes at Villanova.

ET: I was doing a lot of media work as well. I’ve always done the media work. So that was also in the mix.

SG: Well, what brought you back to LaSalle? Why...
ET: I just came here for a stop off and what brought me back is my wife. I met my wife and ‘cause I had been wounded in government service and a good friend of mine who was my station chief who coincidentally was a LaSalle alumnus named Bob Ames had told me just before he passed that...before he was killed...that [pause] this was a great occupation if you’re a young guy without a family but if you ever decide that you’re going to have a family don’t stay. And I met my wife in...quite accidentally. I was working in a state office. I was actually assigned to go to a bureau that processed refugees. Well, she was summer help. And I came off as a little too intimidating when I first showed up and I sensed that I had scared this woman and I...[pause]

SG: And I’ve met your wife. She doesn’t seem to scare easily.

ET: No...well, no, she’s...she’s very...I suppose she’s like any other person. She’s a very feeling, caring woman and I could see that she was a little bit rattled, and I tried to reassure her. I said “Listen...let’s...how ‘bout if we just go outside and sit for a while and have some lunch? Would you like some of my orange? ‘Cause I had an orange and so that is our favorite fruit. And once things started to progress where I thought maybe we’ll make a life for ourselves I figured out that it wasn’t fair to her to bring her into what I had been doing. And I made a choice as to whether I was going to segue in a different direction. And I did. And again LaSalle was supposed to have been a temporary stop and it’s turned into something substantively more than that.

SG: It seems. It seems. So you came back to LaSalle and you went just for a drop off but you ended up staying and I would imagine part of the reason why LaSalle was your choice, not Villanova or...

ET: It was comfortable. I knew the people, I knew the kind of institution, um...and they had an opening so it was easy enough. They knew me and again, I did not expect to be here very long. So I’m not sure if somebody on this end is gonna complain, but I won’t. [narrator smiles]

SG: Well, you’ve done a lot of work for LaSalle and...would it be okay if we continue?

ET: Yeah, about ten more minutes.

SG: And you, even at LaSalle you wear many hats, from teaching political science to your work in the administration. I know on one hand you worked, for the alumni office where your office is today and in my research it said that was one of your first positions...

ET: Yeah, I went from alumni and Brother Pat Ellis, who was president at the time. In fact, the FBI wanted me to move into their branch and I was going to do it and Pat Ellis said “Listen, I’d really like you to become our first director of government relations. I’ve got a position in mind that meets your background and abilities, it’s something we need, you’re a unique fit, and I’d like you to do it.” And I was told at the time that I was the youngest director that the school had ever appointed. I don’t know if that’s true or not. There are certainly some folks who weren’t happy that I was made director because they thought I was a little bit too young but that kept me from taking the FBI job because it just sounded interesting. And the area in which I was situated was public affairs, which eventually became development and is now the advancement area. That is really reflective of changes in how colleges and universities think they ought to be organized and how they view the outside world. And when Brian Elderton became the Vice President for Advancement and Brother Michael, he came and advanced Brother Michael McGinnis’ arrival,
Brian was the outrider sent to organize things the way Brother Mike would want them. They created some Assistant Vice President positions and as a result I became an Assistant Vice President and today am both Counsel to the President and Assistant Vice President for Government and Community Relations.

SG: Well, two things that you’ve done at LaSalle. I know there are many things that you’ve done at LaSalle. But two things that came up quite a lot in my research...well...to be honest with you, one just came up from the personal experiences that I’ve had with you. One of them has been through the World Affairs Council.

ET: Right.

SG: And I’d like to maybe ask a couple questions about that. I would imagine that the work you’ve done with the World Affairs Council, including hosting their flagship Model UN program, their preparatory program here at LaSalle every year during LaSalle’s spring break. I imagine your involvement with that is a natural offshoot of your own professional history...

ET: It is. I had been speaking for the Council for a very long time and was talking to Joanne Lipsky and Margaret Lonzetta one day, who were stuck for a venue for the prep conference and I had carte blanche from Brother Pat Ellis at the time. Offer our facilities whenever you can. And I did and that continued with Brother Joe Burke and Brother Michael, all of whom I think served on the Council board, so it was really, and I’ve done speaking for the Council for years, and they’re a wonderful organization. I’m very proud to be affiliated with them, as is LaSalle, and again, just because we have an interest in supporting educational ventures like that, I made the offer to have the Council use our facilities, and they have for a very long time. It’s probably in excess of 15 years now.

SG: And it also seems to be a logical offshoot of your position in community relations...

ET: Absolutely.

SG: ...as well.

ET: It’s one of the things, Steve, where I have been able to take my, my academic interests, my personal interests, and my administrative duties, and wrap them all into one. You have to understand that I have a very unique hybrid position here. [Pause] The most expansive portion of my duties fall under the rubric of “and other duties as assigned.” So it’s my job is one thing on paper but in practice there’s just about no issue that I haven’t been involved in one way or another. And very often because it requires me to have some, some very sensitive discussions with people behind closed doors [pause] personal diplomacy, institutional diplomacy. That sort of thing. So all of this does come together, and my interest is always to build the base of contacts that I have, that the institution has, to put us in as many venues, and to position us as much as possible so that we can be part of successful activities and we can help others be successful.

SG: Okay. Thank you. I think this might be a good time for us to...

ET: Sure.

SG:...to break. And I’ll get to the second thing I wanted to speak about at our next interview.

ET: 20th Street?
SG: Yeah, exactly: 20th Street [laughs]. Okay. Thank you very much.
ET: Thank you, Steve.

**Part Two**
**Wednesday, April 19, 2006**

SG: Professor Turzanski, thank you again for agreeing to be interviewed for this oral history project.
ET: My pleasure, Steve.
SG: Um, I have your permission to record this...
ET: Yes, you do.
SG: ...conversation? Thank you very much. Before we pick up where we left off, before we continue rather, I’d like to pick up where we left off. The last thing we were talking about was your work with the World Affairs Council of Philadelphia, and I also have contacts with the World Affairs Council and I have this program from...
ET: Ahhh...
SG: from the 2002 Atlas Awards...
ET: Right.
SG: ...where you were honored with their Excellence in Education Award.
ET: Right.
SG: Well, what work did you do to get this recognition with the Council? Is it something besides the...
ET: Well...
SG: ...the Model UN?
ET: Oh, it’s...I’ve been doing lectures for the program for the World Affairs Council in general for years and it’s not just to students on the middle and high school levels but also I’ve done some of their open programming for members. Um...also I’ve done media work for a very long time and again I think you’d have to speak with them, but my understanding as to why they chose me for the honor is that I’d just done a great deal of work that was consistent with their mission in terms of educating the general populous about the critical nature of international relations.
SG: 2002 of course was a really...
ET: Oh, it was um... sure, it was a momentous time to receive the honor.
SG: Is there anything else you’d like to say about the World Affairs Council or your work with them?
ET: To me, the World Affairs Council is one of those extraordinary institutions that allows Philadelphia as a region to fight above its weight, if I can use that great British expression. And the reason I use the expression and it’s applicable, it’s not just to the Council but also to LaSalle University because in terms of my research interests, primarily international relations but most specifically intelligence issues, LaSalle has produced a disproportionately high number of influential individuals in the intelligence field. Especially when you consider LaSalle’s size, endowment, and overall resources as compared to other institutions of higher learning. There has to be something unique about the institution itself and the people who are a part of it or who had been part of it to allow that kind of end result or that kind of output...and the World Affairs Council, I think, performs in a similar fashion.

In fact, I have on my desk a letter from the outgoing president of the World Affairs Council, Buntzie Ellis Churchill, asking us to keep in mind their opening for a program director. If there’s someone we would know of, who could serve as the person who puts together the more than forty events a year that the Council does. They’ve solicited our opinion. Also it’s interesting that at this year’s commencement, that is May 2006, the two honorary degree recipients are Tim O’Toole, a LaSalle alumnus who’s head of the London Underground, the tube, and he’s being honored specifically for his response to the subway bombings of London of last year, and the other’s Buntzie Churchill, Buntzie Ellis Churchill, the outgoing president of the Council. So I’m pleased to say that LaSalle has had a long, happy relationship with the Council, in large part because I think we share similar missions.

SG: That’s mostly education, outreach, along those lines...

ET: It’s education and specifically it is education without consideration for one’s socioeconomic background. In fact, the Council works very hard to reach kids at all levels, in the primary and secondary school system, and the general public, and we do pretty much the same thing.

SG: Okay. Thank you. The other thing that I wanted to talk about and we alluded to it as...at the end of our first interview was your taking the point for LaSalle to try to close...

ET: 20th Street.

SG: ...20th Street.

ET: Right. LaSalle had been trying to close 20th Street since James Tait had been mayor of Philadelphia, and that goes back to the mid 1960s. And there were three overt attempts just to close the street entirely, each one failed, and at the end I suggested to Brother Michael McGinnis when he, he’s the current president of the university, when he took office, that we ought to try and find the middle ground. And we did. Largely at the urging of our Council person, Donna Reed Miller, who did not want us to try and fail again. She encouraged us to also try and look for middle ground. We spoke with city engineers, our own engineers, and found that most of our security and safety problems had to do with southbound traffic.

SG: Going down the steep...

ET: Going down the hill. That’s right. So what we did was advance the notion of a one-lane, one-way northbound or uphill iteration. And the net effect has been to dramatically reduce the safety and security concerns on the street, to create a much better aesthetic, and really to make it
just much safer, not only for LaSalle students, employees, and visitors, but also for local
neighbors and for motorists. The number of vehicular accidents, the number of pedestrian
accidents. Overall, crime and safety numbers, all of that is much to the better because of the
change that was made on 20th Street, which was supported by our immediate neighbors and
supported by all of the political leaders in the area with the sole exception of the late David
Cohen, who was an at-large councilman who for reasons that had nothing to do really with safety
or security was opposed to the measure, worked actively against us, and caused us a considerable
degree of difficulty for a couple of years. But within six months of his passing, everyone had
moved on to other things, and the neighbors and others who are in the area, either on business or
as residents, people with whom I speak, all believe that it is a much safer, cleaner, greener, and
open environment because of what we did out on that street.

SG: Did it surprise you [coughs]...excuse me...did it surprise you that there was the amount of
friction that was caused?

ET: No, because Mr. Cohen had worked energetically against any proposal the University had
made in this area throughout his entire political career. It was a career built in large part based on
class warfare where he painted LaSalle as the large, rich, white institution that was intent on
creating problems for the neighbors, who were middle class to lower middle class, largely
African American, and in terms of the protests we had, for the most part, it was a cadre of about
six people. And it was an unfortunate...it was an unfortunate illustration of the kinds of problems
that Philadelphia tends to demonstrate much too frequently. Small, entrenched, politically
monied interest that decides to stand in the way of some improvement meant for the betterment
of all. It’s really the kind of unfortunate class warfare and element of tribal politics in
Philadelphia that rivals some of the worst things you’ve heard about Tammany Hall and Chicago
Ward politics and just about any other place in the country that you can think of.

SG: [Clears throat] Excuse me. Doing my research in the archives with Brother Joe, I have to
say that the lion’s share of information that we found with your name connected to it really was
this 20th St...uh... project. It was...there were reams of articles from the Inquirer, from The
Northeast Times, and other, school newspapers concerning this. It was...it seems like it
dominated or at least was a major part of your workload here for quite some time.

ET: Well, it was because it was such a public issue. Again, anytime an institution tries to
accomplish something over a period in excess of four decades, it tells you first of all it has to be
important, and it required a great deal of persistent attention and aggressive action. It was very
public because Councilman Cohen decided to make it the battle of his Council career. And again
it was most unfortunate because he did not pay attention to the facts of the matter. Instead, it was
all about politics and his battle with the District Councilwoman Donna Reed Miller and I will say
it’s not the only thing I did for the University but it was certainly among the more public things
because it required meetings with people on the outside, a lot of press attention as you suggest,
and some very public, dramatic activity in City Hall.

SG: And I would imagine this all fell under your duties as “other duties that are prescribed to
you”?

ET: Oh, I will tell you that at an institution like LaSalle, there are many administrators, especially
those with an external focus like mine, where the lion’s share of the work we do, falls under the rubric of “and other duties as assigned.” So especially now in terms of how my position is structured, a lot of times my job is to attend to the details of things that aren’t normally discussed in public, sometimes you prefer not to discuss them in public. Every institution has situations like that, and it’s a very interesting combination of very externally focused, public issues and activities, and at the same time, very discreet, detail-oriented, bordering on minutiae, kinds of functions that people just don’t think about from day to day.

SG: It almost sounds like there are parallels between your work on the 20th St. Project and your work [laughs] in the intelligence community...

ET: Oh, Steve, a great many. Because, in terms of my job, I view my responsibility as supporting the policies made by the president and his senior team, supporting those policies, informing those policies, and very often bringing information to the president that is value-added, that is to say you can’t get it from other places, that is policy-relevant, that is to say it allows him to make informed decisions as to how we’re going to spend our time, money, and influence, that is real-time, not quite history but a good take as to what’s happening at the moment and, at the same time, a bit predictive, looking beyond what’s happening now and trying to understand the challenge or the opportunity within the context, the strategic plan of the universe,...so...I just happen to believe, based on my past experience, my academic training, and general inclination that [pause] the functions of intelligence replicate themselves in many different ways, especially for those who have an administrative responsibility, and anybody who’s going to control time, money, and the actions of people knows that there’s a price to pay for every action. And embedded within some actions are great rewards and sometimes you get it wrong and it costs you a lot. So, yes, there are striking parallels and I suppose in one respect, it’s what’s...the fact that I have the kind of job I do really does allow me to both feed and feed off my academic interests and intelligence.

SG: Thanks. Would you say you’re [clears throat] excuse me, satisfied with or is LaSalle satisfied with the current compromise?

ET: On 20th Street?

SG: Yeah.

ET: Oh. Most certainly.

SG: Do you think they’ll be a push in the future, maybe, to...I saw the plans, the proposed plans, having this beautiful archway...

ET: Well, that was an iteration going back about...hm...twelve years now where originally the street was going to be closed, it would be an esplanade and fountain from the northern drive or the upper drive at the Brothers’ residence leading up to the top of 20th and Olney, to the top of the hill, and with a welcome arch. That may happen one day. For right now, I think that we and...if you spoke to most people who have been here long enough to know the difference...there is a considerable difference in the aesthetic and the safety and security situation. Just being able to cross that street as conveniently as you can and not having to worry about cars whipping around from Olney Avenue, whipping down the hill. I mean, that’s an 85-foot drop in grade from the top of the hill to the bottom of the hill, which is considerable given the street, of the length that it
is. That's pretty darn dangerous. Well, that's not there anymore, and we've addressed most of our safety and security problems. And we have no plans currently to go back and to try and get the street closed. Although we've explained to neighbors there may come a time when they want it closed...

SG: How would it be to their advantage? I understand they want to get to the northbound expressway...

ET: Well, right, but, most of the traffic that had utilized 20th Street was the thru traffic. Now this is a very important point. 20th Street did not exist when the Christian Brothers moved LaSalle College here. The street was...the land for the street was taken under eminent domain from then-LaSalle College. The street was built and it was zoned for local traffic only, but what had happened over time, and again it's because of that...that drop, that 85-foot drop in elevation, that really allows you to pick up considerable speed, we would clock people in excess of 60 miles an hour on that street, on the block, the one block section is occupied by the University on both sides. Had traffic in excess of 60 by the time they're 3/4 of the way down the hill. A lot of accidents at the foot of the hill as a result. Well, those thru vehicles didn't just pass through the heart of LaSalle. They also ran through neighborhood side streets getting here.

And what has happened is the volume and the profile of the traffic along with the speed of the traffic passing through neighborhood side streets have been dramatically reduced. You have fewer vehicles, you have a much, a much reduced volume of trucks, and what you have left over by way of volume has greatly reduced in speed because they're not racing to get to the track that sends them down 20th Street, slingshotting on to Wister or Bellefield. I'm sorry. Bellefield. So all of that's been good for neighbors and they've seen a reduction in the volume of trucks, in the volume of overall vehicles, and in the speed of those vehicles, and that's made it easier for them. Fewer accidents on neighborhood side streets as a result and more of the traffic dispersing over a wider range. It's not that you had traffic originating from around 20th and Olney, so you have concentrated displacement. You had traffic from Cheltenham, from Strawberry Mansion, West Mount Airy, Germantown, that has found different approaches. So it's a very wide area in which the dispersal pattern has occurred. And the Streets Department predicted that it would be negligible in its effect and it has been. In terms of the...the people trying to get to the expressway. As to the people who live in the area, it takes you two or three minutes longer to get to or from the expressway but overall it's a much better vehicular and pedestrian safety environment.

SG: Would you say that the relationship between LaSalle and the surrounding neighbors is good and has that been constant?

ET: Ah, the relationship between LaSalle and its surrounding neighborhood has been episodic. It depends on what the issue is and quite frankly the level of misconduct of LaSalle students who reside in the neighborhood. One of the problems LaSalle has is one that just about every educational institution in an urban environment has. We've got kids from outside the area who come here and live in residences in the community where their neighbors are of a different age, a different race, and usually a different mind set. Largely because they're either retired or they work for a living, and you've got kids who are away from home who decide that it's okay to have a couple beers, watch the Flyers game and then go outside and walk around and be kind of loud
in discussing what just happened or didn’t happen and these are town and gown issues that every place has.

We’ve tried to move beyond that by serving as a convener of resources for the community and an... an engine of economic development and in that sense LaSalle follows the pattern of higher education around the country. Town and gown problems in the past, flight from the neighborhood surrounding the university, some deterioration in that neighborhood, and an eventual recognition on the part of all parties that instead of having an adversarial relationship, you’d better work in tandem with one another to stabilize the housing stock, bring in new residents and economic amenities, if you will, schools, shopping centers, the like, and work together. The idea of the rising tide lifting all boats.

That’s why when Dwight Evans, who’s a LaSalle alumnus incidentally, State Representative, candidate for mayor, came to us and asked if we would allow a portion of our property which currently serves as a playing field for woman’s softball, a practice field for football, and as parking, which everybody needs... when he asked us to take a piece of this ground that we use for those purposes and allow a supermarket to be built, we said yes because this community has not had a supermarket for more than 46 years, and it means an amenity that primarily serves neighbors but also students and employees but is also going to employ about 250 neighbors full-time just in the supermarket. There are six other retail establishments that will be part of that. The overall employment possibility is on the order of 350 permanent jobs and 150 part-time jobs. It’s the sort of thing where we said okay. We’ll bite the bullet and put up with some parking troubles and try to replicate this playing field elsewhere because our interest is the overall safety, economic health, and desirability of this neighborhood, of which we are a part.

So I would say at times you do run into some old thinking, and there’s certainly problems that students cause because of misconduct in the neighborhood but because of some very concerted efforts and also the leadership of our current president, we’ve elevated the discourse and broadened it so that we’re not just talking to neighbors about problems. We also talk to them about opportunities and that’s been important. That’s changed over the last five years or so.

SG: And you see the relationship with the community getting stronger as...

ET: I do. I see new players all the time. Some of the people with whom we’ve once in the past we’ve had just had... it’s a redundancy. I apologize. But in the past we’d had contact only when there was a problem, now they’re more proactive, more pleasant conversations because we’re also talking about opportunities. And it’s not a static process and it’ll never reach a conclusion. It’s like a best practice. You keep on re-making the art and sometimes you do better than at others but you try to learn from your mistakes. One thing I tell neighbors consistently is that I do not promise you that you will always be happy with us but I do promise that we will do our level best to address any concerns you have and to try to deal with opportunities and with problems in a collaborative fashion. Sometimes we’re gonna disagree and we’ll have to agree to disagree, but on balance you’ll think us an asset to the neighborhood.

SG: Moving on to a different topic. Currently, you’re one of the main public faces of LaSalle. And you have a lot of local, national, and international exposure in the media, print and in television. And in your work with the Foreign Policy Institute. How did you first become
involved in media?

ET: Wow. I have been doing media in excess of 20 years and various organizations with which I had been affiliated where for one reason or other people have decided that I was an articulate spokesman and I did it officially for the United States government and...

SG: In what capacity?

ET: On occasion I was called upon to offer press statements or to grant interviews to journalists and really I, now that I think about it, I've been on radio, television, and in print for more than 25 years. Which is kind of interesting.

SG: And I know you do a lot of work for, or I understand you do a lot of work for the Canadian Broadcasting Corporation...

ET: I am a correspondent for the Canadian Broadcast Corporation Radio Division, and I do national security analysis for Fox News Channel. I appear on CNN, MSNBC, CNBC, BBC, radio, um...Irish National Radio, RTN One, Turkish National Television, Turkish National Radio, um...about a dozen radio stations nationwide and including places like Bakersfield, CA, Seattle, WA, San Antonio, TX. I'm pretty big on Wisconsin Public Radio, Connecticut and New England. [pause] Comcast, I'm the National Security Correspondent for one of their lead programs. It's called "It's Your Call" with Lynn Doyle and the work I've done has been part of four Emmy Awards, regionals, but they still count...

SG: Sure.


BREAK IN RECORDING

ET: ...knows me because the connection to LaSalle, saw me on television, and said, "Hey, we're looking for interns. Can you put us in touch with the communication department?" A lot of that sort of thing happens.

SG: I was gonna ask you, is there a most memorable moment or most rewarding moment you've had in media in the past 25 years?

ET: Oh, wow. In media. [pause] Gee, I don't know. I don't know about rewarding because [pause]. It tends to...I don't want to sound pretentious, but it...it does run into a blur. I do a couple hundred media events a year. And they're all over the place. And um...I've been on television with some pretty impressive people. I've been on with Henry Kissinger, ambassadors, senators, [pause]. I've got some mementos and photos in my office with people and I...I don't segment my life in a way that the media is discreet from everything else I do. So it tends to run together and um...I will say this. I've been doing Fox News Channel since it started, and they send a car to take me to studio where we shoot and the first time they sent a car for me, my sons, I have twin boys and a daughter. Daughter's a freshman here. Stephanie. And Andrew and Theodore are sophomores at Archbishop Ryan. In fact, they just turned 16 last week. So they had to be about 5 or 6 years old. And my wife was very impressed because here came a Lincoln
Town Car stretch executive limo to pick me up in our cul-de-sac in Northeast Philadelphia, and all the neighbors were a little taken aback. And as everyone thought this was such a big deal, one of my boys looked at me and said, "Dad, why are they sending a car for you?" And...and [laughs] that is a quick dose of humility. If I had...if I was entertaining any notions of being too self-important.

So I think the nice thing is when I’m out and about in the public and someone comes up to me, stops me, and knows my name and where I teach. And they know I’m Professor Turzanski, I’m at LaSalle University, that happens a lot, and it’s nice. Usually, it’s more often than not, they’re saying nice things. Every once in a while, you get someone who doesn’t like what I have to say. But that’s nice. And I would hope that people recognize it as a net plus for the university. I think it is. Otherwise, I wouldn’t do it. And again, I’ve done a lot of big tv. I think any of the major international events in the last ten years of so, I’ve done national television, and international television and radio on. There’s there’s a measure of pride and satisfaction in that.

SG: Besides your national and international exposure, you also are a commentator on local politics. I don’t mean city politics, for instance. I mean, I mean the local reactions to national politics. I dug up these articles from, I guess they’re from a LaSalle magazine...

ET: Oh, yeah...

SG: ...and they’re wonderful. You were....

ET: [Laughs]

SG: ...you are doing sort of a point/counterpoint...

ET: Point/counterpoint, sure...

SG: ...with Dr. Mary Ann...

ET: Mary Ellen Balchunis. Well, two of the...what they’d done is the two Clinton races. I noticed they didn’t do the one Bush race. Or the two Bush races where Bush won. They did both where Bush Senior and then Bob Dole lost. And...sure. And I think they came up to me precisely because they needed to...someone to talk about a loss. And I did. So, yeah, that’s kind of small ball. That’s [pause] more specific to the LaSalle constituency and the campus constituency.

SG: Well, one of the things I really appreciated reading these articles is your humor. Not just the text, but in the pictures, your hand’s sort of up like, "Well, what do you know?"

ET: What are you going to do? Bush got clobbered and deserved to get clobbered.

SG: And then you have the...

ET: Yeah...

SG: And then with Bob Dole, you wrote, there’s one where you wrote on the chalkboard, "Too little, too late." Of course, here’s one with you and the picture of Ronald Reagan...

ET: Yeah...

SG: ...and it’s the same picture, I think, that’s on your wall behind you. But I, yeah, would the
With another professor who’s obviously gloating...

ET: Oh, no. Oh, listen. I would hope that...and I’ve had enough people confirm this for me, so I’m sanguine in the thought that I’m not identified as being a partisan. I certainly am identified with a point of view. And that I don’t mind. It’s...I think everybody’s got a point of view. You want to be fair and I have friends on both sides of the aisle. I have supported people of both parties, both major parties. And on occasion, even an Independent or two. And I try not to be partisan, and try not to, to make people think that I, I don’t have a point of view that is open to investigation. And, by the way, I count as great success the fact that, in terms of my commentary and what I do for the institution, I have very good friends who are Democrats and very good friends who are Republicans, and very good friends who are in media. And we can have honest disagreements, and we can work together in common causes, and people, for the most part, I think, overwhelmingly, people think this way, that they can work with me. And therefore LaSalle will play things straight with them. And they’re not uncomfortable coming to me or to the University. Quite the opposite. People tend to reach out to us because I think they...they respect our integrity.

SG: On college campuses around the country in the past several years, there’s been some heightened discourse, I’m saying it nicely, between partisan factions among student body. How would you gauge the political environment here at LaSalle?

ET: [pause] I think students for the most part are apolitical on this campus. There are pockets of kids with interests and the one thing I do wish we had a bit more of is a vibrant exchange of ideas. I will say, that the faculty here, as the faculty in just about most of higher education, tend to lean left, and again I have to be a bit careful here. I’m not sure how widely these comments are going to be disseminated. I find that discussions of politics on college campuses to be much more close-minded than what I’ve experienced on the outside. And that’s a shame. And I would...I think one of the things that faculty should do, and a sign of health, would be to have people who strongly disagree with one another engage in vigorous exchange that never intrudes on the personal, never questions an individual’s motives. You’d question whether the beliefs are advisable, you can question whether the person is sane or not, I guess you can do that, but just...it’s a shame that we don’t have greater exchange in higher ed, and largely I think because it’s very hard for someone with conservative philosophical orientation to find a home in higher ed. It tends to be the nature of the beast. It tends to be the case with mainstream media as well. The exceptions are talk radio and the blogs. Blogs are actually quite interesting because you have probably the most active exchange of views on the blogs these days between left and right. It’s not uniformly good by any stretch, but there are some very pointed and accurate exchanges as representing both sides. [pause]

Turzanski? [answers cell phone]
[pause in recording]

SG: One other thing that came up also with the...on this topic of politics at LaSalle was a political affairs magazine that....
ET: Oh, LaSpam.
SG: I don’t know if it’s still in publication.
ET: Neither do I.
SG: This one is from February 1991...
ET: Joe Brogan. Well, that was, actually, I must say the kids we had here at the time had a great interest in politics, and Joe Brogan, of the political science department, was the moderator, and again, I...I...at the risk of repeating what I said the last time. [knock on door] Just want to make sure that I clearly state for the record what an extraordinary man Joe Brogan is. He’s an extraordinary scholar, he’s a man of tremendous integrity, the kids love him with reason, and...to me, if you’re looking for someone who embodies many of the great things about LaSalle, it’s Joe Brogan. Excuse me one sec.
SG: Sure.
[pause in recording]
SG: So we were in the middle of talking about LaSpam. You say that students in the 1990s, when these were being published, were really political, and you mention that students are less political these days at LaSalle, you think?
ET: Well, it may not be fair of me to say that because quite honestly, I have so many demands on my time that I can’t be as active with the students as I’d like to be. Or have the kind of contact that regular faculty have. So...
SG: But, it seems that you still maybe... I notice that there’s a basketball over here.
ET: Yeah! I just got that. [laughs] And this is an interesting story. I was at a luncheon at the Union League in town and it was with the Heritage Foundation, and I left the luncheon and...I didn’t stay to have lunch. I basically did my talking and left because I had made a commitment sometime earlier to speak for the College Republicans, and I guess it’s the sort of thing that faculty members routinely do for the students here. I’m not unique in that respect. I think a lot of people, we talked about this the last time, the kind of personal contact we have with our students, go out of their way to be accessible, and it was a pleasure to do it.
SG: And my...
ET: So they gave me this recognition. I don’t...it’s a LaSalle basketball, signed. It says, “To Mr. Turzanski. Thank you.” and it’s signed by the College Republicans. I’m not sure what the significance of signing a basketball is, other than they probably got it at the campus store for a decent price and could slap their names on it, but it finds a place of honor in my museum. [Phone rings.]
[pause in recording]
SG: So I have one more series of questions to ask you.
ET: Sure.
SG: But before I ask you them, I have another series of questions to ask you.
ET: Okay. [laughs]
SG: [laughs] These really are to clarify from last week’s interview. Just so we have it on tape. Your wife’s name is?
SG: I was going to offer you congratulations...
ET: Yes, thanks...
SG: You mentioned that last week and...
ET: Congratulate me and offer her condolences.
SG: [laughs] I’m sure. Another question is... I never asked you what your parents did.
ET: My dad was an auto body mechanic. My mom is a store clerk. She worked for Sears and Roebuck for a whole lot of years and then she works at the Port Richmond Pharmacy in Port Richmond, and they’re both refugees from the Second World War, and I am the first of my family to be born in the United States.
SG: Do you have siblings?
ET: I do. I have three brothers, all younger. The brother right after me, Richard, is a sergeant in the counter-terror bureau of the Philadelphia Police Department. Next comes Henry, who is a postman living in Michigan. And then the runt of the litter [phone rings] the youngest is Leonard, and he works in a factory in Stroudsburg, Pennsylvania. [phone rings]
[break in recording]
SG: I just need to make sure the phone ring didn’t drown it out.
ET: Sure.
SG: Your youngest brother Leonard does what?
ET: He works in...he’s a...he’s a mechanic who works in a factory in Stroudsburg.
SG: Ed, this next question may be touchy, and of course, you know, you...
ET: I’ll treat it with the appropriate discretion.
SG: Yes, exactly. I’m sure a lot of people at LaSalle are interested in knowing the things that you did, a LaSalle alumnus doing some very important work for the United States government. And I guess there’s a lot you probably cannot talk about, but is there anything you can say about the work that you did?
ET: That’s a good question because [pause] I’m bound by a seal for a lot of what I did do, and I wasn’t allowed to start speaking about what I’d done with the government until 1991. Or was it 1990? And when people ask, I say I worked in the US intelligence community and spent time in the Middle East, Central Asia, and Eastern Europe. Over time, I suppose I’ll get permission to talk about more things, and every once in a while, I get reminders, and I get messages that I can be a bit more forthcoming. I don’t know if I’ve shown you that, but...[refers to frame of medals]
SG: Yeah, I wanted to ask you a little bit more about that...

ET: Yeah, but...it’s...for now that’s what I say to people.

SG: Can you say what, not what you did to get some of these awards and medals, but what some of these medals are? We were talking about the Purple Hearts briefly.

ET: Yeah. I was wounded three times and received Purple Hearts. I was in a very unique unit. I was recruited out of Marine Corps boot camp into the Director of Operations for the CIA. Very small compartment, and [pause] a lot of these commendations are for service in the field. In some cases, they’re unit citations, and again, it’s a nicety on the part of some friends who sent it along just because they’re, I mean, I would always hope that some day, not necessarily when I’m gone, but certainly if I’m gone, that at least my kids can know. [pause]

For me, the top thing was with my folks because there were times I think my dad was disappointed in me because he kind of thought that I was trying to work through some wanderlust. He didn’t realize that I actually was in government service. But I couldn’t say anything to him. And that’s part of the personal price you pay. You lead a life in which your accomplishments require anonymity. And in the absence of a good explanation, as to what you’re doing, your loved ones sometimes gravitate toward a more desperate answer as to what...how you’re spending your time. And they can be disappointed in you. So I’m just glad that toward the end of his life, my dad recognized that I’d done some important things. And we couldn’t get into it much beyond that, but [pause] it’s...it’s tough.

SG: I can imagine.

ET: Yeah.

SG: Your fa—your discussion about your father offers a nice segue into my next question. You mentioned that you were from a working class background. In the presentations we’re doing for this project, it seems that a lot of professors and brothers at LaSalle also came from working class backgrounds. It seems to be what a lot of LaSalle faculty associate themselves with. Do you...would you consider LaSalle to be a working class school?

ET: Yup. And proud of it. Remember Saint LaSalle put pens in the hands of the sons and daughters of plow sharemen. And to some people, this was a scandal, but I would like to think that it is the animating ethos of his faith that makes him the patron saint of Catholic education. And LaSalle as an institution and the Christian Brothers as a religious order, proudly and vigorously go into the inner cities and reach people without means to help them improve themselves and raise subsequent generations. And I have worked outside the home since I’ve been nine years old. I paid my own way through high school, college, graduate school, and even when my dad was ill, while I was in college, wound up kicking money into the family pot to help things go. And I actually at one point was thinking of just quitting school and going to work to help support the family and God bless him, Richard Cleary, C. Richard Cleary, my mentor, said, “Son, you’re not going to help your father or your family by not doing well in school. Remember why you’re here.” And it’s a message I needed to hear, and it’s one that I have repeated many times over the years to other kids who’ve had some sort of difficulties from the outside.

And I used to tell my students, “This classroom is your port in the storm. I don’t care...
where you’re from, I don’t care what troubles you have. Nothing can touch you in this classroom. And what you do here determines your capacity to fix...fix what’s wrong on the outside.” So I think it’s by virtue of our mission that so many come together who have worked with their hands, who are not embarrassed to say that, and anyone who is embarrassed to say that or doesn’t want to have contact with people who work with their hands, well, those are behaviors that carry their own punishments. I don’t think you’re going to be happy in life because most of us still have to go out and work very hard, even if it’s a knowledge-based industry. All this talk you hear about greater productivity in many cases also means much longer hours. We just...we work hard. We certainly don’t want to be in a situation where we work to live. Or, I’m sorry. We don’t want to be in a situation where we live to work. We want to be in a situation where we work to live. And, again, I...it’s who I am. I’m proud of it. And I am reassured because of all the good people whom I’ve met here, who are my friends, who have a similar background.

SG: It’s fascinating.

ET: Yeah, it is.

SG: To meet so many people who are also narrators for our project also feel the same way, come from the same backgrounds...

ET: Well, and by the way, this school again fights above its weight. We produce one hell of a lot of captains of industry and leaders in the overall community. And I think it’s a healthy thing to have someone who started out as an hourly employee work with his hands who winds up being a bank president or head of the Chamber of Commerce or top lawyer in the firm. Things like that. We have a lot of successes of which to be proud.

SG: Brother Joe Burke had been quoted as saying “LaSalle is rigorous but not rigid.” Do you think that applies?

ET: I think that’s a very apt description. And I think we make a lot of effort to meet people where they are and to lift them up where they need to be. Which, in terms of my faith commitment, is what I think of the Catholic church. At least the best aspects of it. The ideal to which we strive. Is to reach people where they are and to lift them up. And it’s a very nice term or phrase that Brother Joe offered.

SG: As a student at LaSalle, a recent student that just started the graduate program last year, I’ve come to know that LaSalle’s been through a lot of major changes over the decades, from several re-locations to growing out of different locations and finally moving to this campus. To decrease enrollment during economic crises, like the...well, particularly to decrease enrollment during the world wars...

ET: Sure.

SG: ...and that causing an economic crisis in the school. And the decline of the Christian Brothers. Brother Joe spoke to our group in saying that we are a numbered group and someday, he says, they’ll be gone. And also LaSalle becoming a coed institution. I know I gave you a lot there, but are there any of those that would jump out to you as being very important or are there other changes that LaSalle’s gone through that you think are worthy of note?

ET: Well, LaSalle and the Catholic church are institutions that adapt over time. That’s what
happens to living institutions. We don’t abandon our mission, though. And happily, this is a school that first of all started out in Center City, moved here just in time for the Great Depression, and was hit hard by that and by the Second World War, and rebounded and grew strong because of the GI bill. One of the greatest pieces of legislation responsible for lifting more Americans to prosperity than just about anything else you can think of. The GI bill was fantastic. It was a great. It saved LaSalle, saved many schools like LaSalle. Made higher ed into an expectation for Americans, and just elevated the standard of living for millions of people. And for the country as a whole.

Happily, we admitted women. And, we don’t have any barriers, conscious barriers, to having people come here and study. We spend a lot of our own money to subsidize the cost for those who can’t. And I’m very proud at the high percentage of LaSalle students, and I think it’s on the order of 40% of the freshman class who are the first of their family to go to college. That shows that the...the mission is still strong. About a dozen years ago, there was some talk about LaSalle leaving the city ‘cause it’s a tough place in which to do business. Just the challenges of an urban environment can be overwhelming at times. And the decision was made that we’re not going to leave because this is where we’re supposed to be, where we should be. So, we’ve re-committed ourselves. And I think it’s good for the city. The city’s very appreciative of that. I think it’s good for the region, and it’s good for our kids, especially those who don’t come from an urban environment, who have lived in rather well-to-do communities, just to instill in them an appreciation for what they have and the sense of obligation to work towards the betterment of the society. Which is what I think [pause] to paraphrase President Kennedy, “God’s work on Earth must be our own.”

So that’s all very good, and it’s a great institution, and it is a Philadelphia institution. I’m proud to be affiliated with LaSalle. I’m proud to be affiliated with the Union League. LaSalle was founded in 1863, a year after the Union League was founded in 1862. The Union League was founded to preserve the Union and support Abraham Lincoln in the Civil War. A lot of good things happened because that conflict ended the way it did. I think a lot of good things happened because LaSalle was founded and people of good conscience persevered. And, I would like to think that, although the numbers of Christian Brothers are on the decline, and that they cannot serve in as many capacities that, first of all, the Christian Brothers will be always with us in some number, but more importantly, that the ethos of the Christian Brothers will be with us. There’s something called the LaSallian Leadership Institute, where the Christian Brothers have reached out to lay people, to provide them with very specific training, to ensure that LaSallian institutions proceed with the same spirit, the same ethos, that characterized the institution when the brothers were here in large numbers. It’s a sound move, and I think many good things will come of it. So, is that expression popularized during the Second World War, that there will always be an England? I think there will always be a LaSalle, regardless of where you are. Where the name LaSalle is prominent, good people tend to self-select, and they will come together out of the sense of mission, sacrifice, work hard and succeed in that same sense.

SG: Is there, looking to the future of LaSalle, do you see any direction that LaSalle’s headed, any particular way it’s likely to grow, or a way you’d like it to grow?

ET: So much of that is a function of funds. No money, no mission. [chuckles] I think we will
proceed to try to reach people where they are, to give them opportunity. I think that will be a constant. Our presence is growing in Bucks County, and even though a number of years back we had made a decision that we would cap ourselves in terms of our growth at this location, I don’t think that’s true anymore. I think in higher education, if you do not grow, you will quickly stagnate and be left behind. So I don’t think we’re going to let that happen. And certainly under the leadership of Brother Michael McGinnis, our interest is to become full participants in civic life. Not that we hadn’t been, but in many cases, we had done so quietly, and I think we’re doing the task much more openly today. And that’s where I think we’re going to continue to grow.

And, as education changes we will continue to change. Also, I do think you will see us moving more and more into distance learning. Just because of the nature of populations, and the opportunities that technologies afford. This is the way more society or more business in society is being conducted over the internet and through fiber optic communications, I think we’re going to get into course offerings the same way.

SG: Is there anything you’d like to...to say about LaSalle sort of as a closing for this interview?

ET: The effects of LaSalle have been transformative in the most positive of ways for [pause] this city, this region, and so many people whom I know, respect, and love. I am very grateful for the opportunity to have come here, and for the many people who sacrificed so that I could do well. And it’s why I feel a special obligation every day that I work for the institution. It really is a sense of mission. It’s a wonderful place, and I know other people who have gone to institutions we won’t name probably feel the same kind of kinship. All of that’s a good thing. And I am very proud to be part of this Roman Catholic institution of higher learning, and I am humbled and a bit taken aback that I would be asked to opine on all these things because quite frankly, there are just a whole lot of people that I would have sent you to instead of myself, but I’m appreciative of the opportunity to speak with you. And I hope what I’ve provided is both accurate and fair in terms of representing the institution. And I am just happy to be part of the team.

SG: Thank you very much.

ET: Thank you, Steve.

SG: Well before I shut this off, maybe I should ask you, who do you...who would you recommend that future students who take this class interview?

ET: Oh, great. That’s a fantastic question. Well, let’s talk about people who are here. Brother Emory Maullinour, a long-serving provost, man of extraordinary intellectual energy and devotion, Joe Brogan, someone I’d put in the same category, Jack Reardon, Emeritus Professor of Accounting who first came here as a young man when LaSalle High School was in Wister Hall, Roland Holroyd, who was the esteemed professor of biology, referred to it as the Small Mammal House. It was where the high school was. But, Jack came here for high school, for college, went to the University of Pitt for his graduate work, and came back here and had a full career as a faculty member, Mary Anne Gaus, in accounting, or I’m sorry, in management. Mary Anne is an esteemed faculty member, a Linback Award winner and in the first class of women to have graduated from LaSalle. Jack Rossi in the history department. Jack Seedow in the English department. Fred Foley, Fred Foley, really interesting, good guy, former Vice President for
Development who’s Director of Grants and Research who, despite being a Saint Joseph’s alumnus, has taught here for many years, is in the administration, offered tremendous service, Brother Charles Gresh, former Dean of Students...

SG: Actually, Brother Gresh was, I think, ...

ET: Absolutely. And you’ll understand there are so many people. I don’t want to do short shrift. It’s almost as if you name one, you’re now under the gun to name everybody who deserves to be there, so...

SG: When I first approached you for this interview, you were hesitant...you were like, “I know someone in particular,” someone who couldn’t do it and you said also because they were in Florida.

ET: Oh, Jim McDonald. The longest-serving Alumni Director LaSalle had. LaSalle through and through. And has an absolutely encyclopedic knowledge of the alumni base of the institution. Jim’s just...just a great, great guy, and...

SG: Were you two working together on your baseball trips? Was that the two of you doing it?

ET: Yeah, we used to do that.

SG: I dug up some things about you organizing trips to see the Reading Phillies...

ET: Yeah, all the time...

SG: ...baseball...

ET: And Jim’s...Jim’s just a wonderful guy. Of course, Brother Pat Ellis. [pause] I tell you who’s also interesting. You oughta go talk to Pete the barber. God bless him, he’s in his nineties, and he’s been cutting hair here for fifty years. I would think you’ll hear a thing or two then. And... [pause] well, that’s a good enough list for starters.

SG: That’s a very good list.

ET: Oh, and don’t forget the alumni. There’s a lot of very loyal alumni. There’s a guy named Jack French. Alumnus from the 1950s who worked at Bell Telephone for years, is a resident of this area, is actually auditing the graduate class I’m teaching right now. Who else? Oh, and by all means, Brother Mike McGinnis, a student, honors student, graduate, Christian Brother, and faculty member, and Faculty Senate President, and current president of the university, and Jim Goulic who is our Assistant Vice President for Alumni Relations, both an alumnus and an athlete from the University. So, once you’ve run through those, get back to me and I’ll give you a couple more.

SG: Sure. Alright. Thank you so much again for doing this interview, and I should ask again. I do have your permission to make this recording?

ET: Yes, you do, and, it was very kind of you to think of me, and very kind of Brother Joe to insist that I be included, although to quote Wayne and Garth “I’m not worthy.”

SG: [laughs] Again, thank you.

ET: Okay, Steve...
SG: I appreciate it...
ET: ...thanks. My pleasure. I hope it helps.
SG: Yeah. Well, I'm sure it will be...